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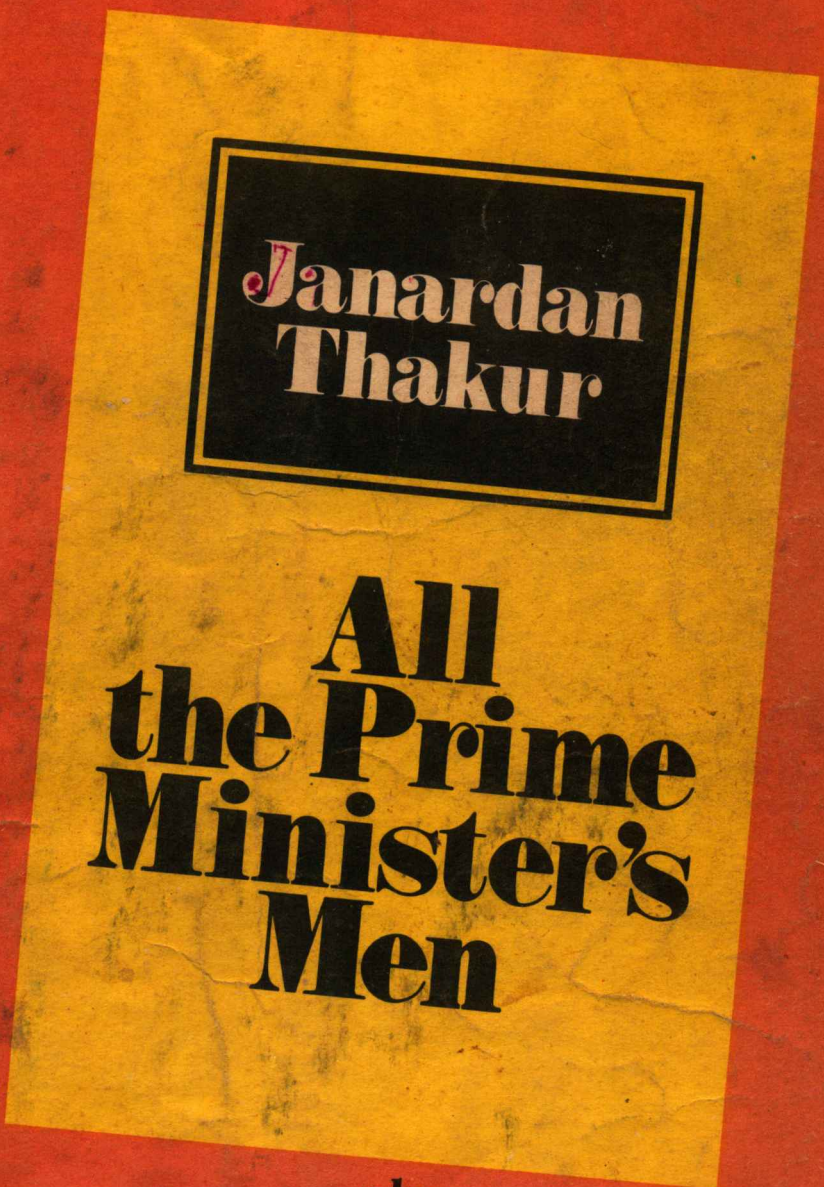

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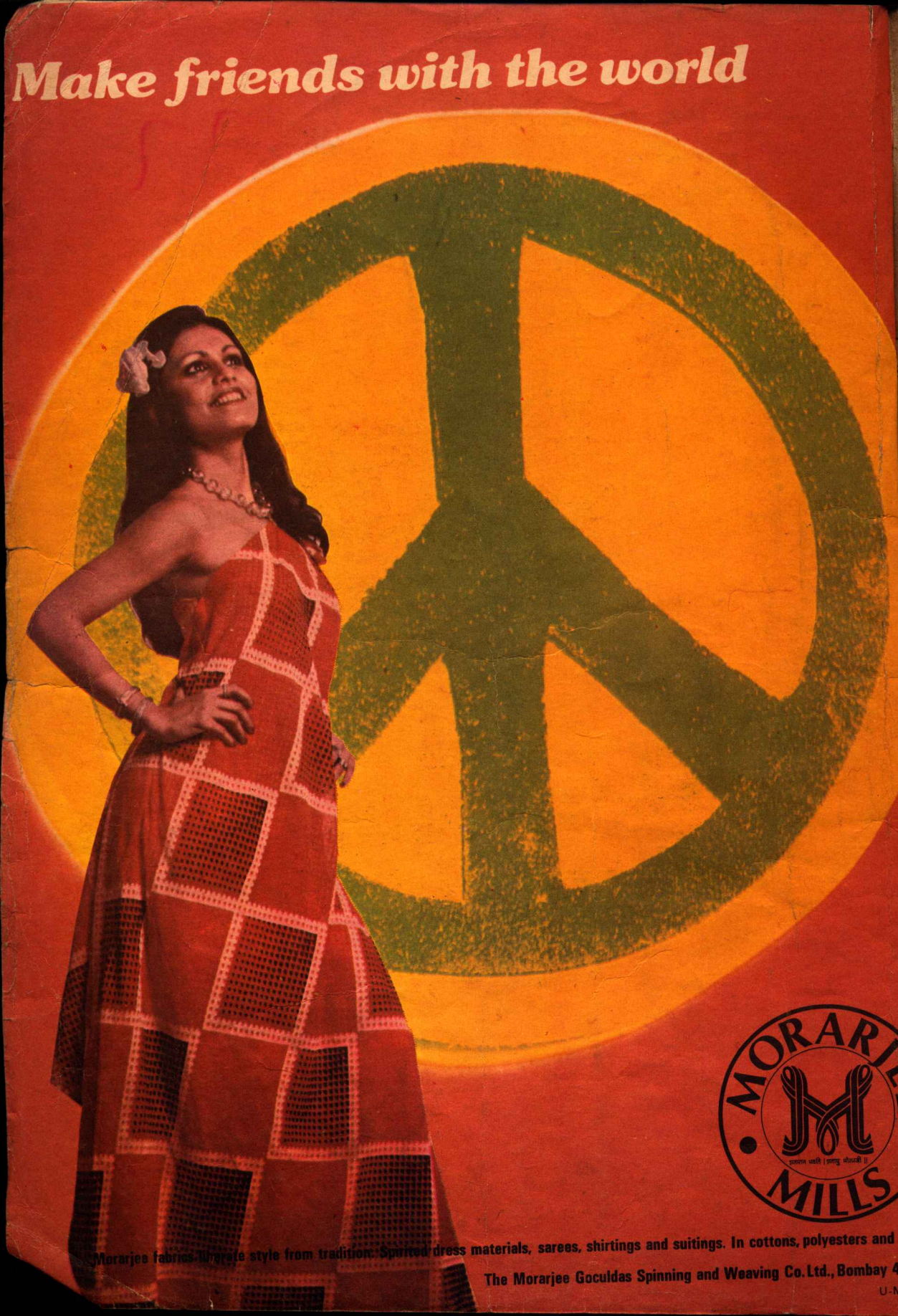

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on the marquee

IN "ALL THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEN" by Janardan Thakur you have a Who's Who from the Rogue's Gallery. The hardcover book published by Vikas Publishing House deals with the Nehrus—Jawaharlal, Mrs Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi, Bansi Lal, V. C. Shukla, D. K. Barooah, Yashpal Kapoor, R. K. Dhawan, Dhirendra Brahmachari, Rukhsana and other khidmatgars and cronies. Having carried condensed versions of two 'Emergency' books—"Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi" by D. R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar in the July and August issues, and "Two Faces of Indira Gandhi" by Uma Vasudev in the September Imprint, we are publishing only the following chapters from the original book in this issue:

THE BACKDROP: NEHRU TO SANJAY
BANSI LAL – THE JAT BULLY
DHIRENDRA BRAHMACHARI – INDIRA'S RASPUTIN
THE CURTAIN

"All the Prime Minister's Men" is the last book to be serialised in Imprint for a long time to come on the subject of Emergency and Mrs Indira Gandhi.

R.V. Pandit

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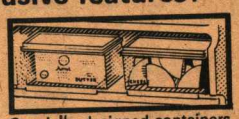

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Impressions

Rearing butterflies at home provides an absorbing occupation for the Narangs, who prepared this feature specially for *Imprint*. The trials of butterfly-breeding are forgotten the moment a new-born butterfly tenderly crawls on to an extended finger. . .

DISCOVERING BUTTERFLIES

Text and photographs
by Mehtab and Narinder S. Narang

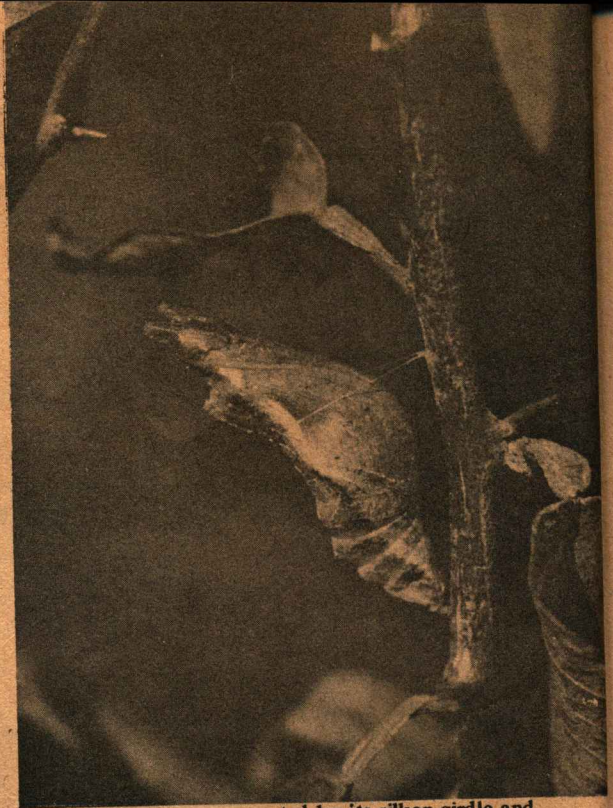
I HAVE NEVER come across an amateur Lepidopterist (one who studies butterflies and moths) during the last two decades of my travels and sojourns in widely separated regions of our country, with the exception of an unexpected and unforgettable meeting with a serious butterfly-collector, in the valley of Kashmir. He was a foreigner, engaged in wild and apparently senseless caperings; his silvery-grey hair, his shirt, his jacket, and a kite-like contraption in his hand, all flapping wildly in the landscape. My curiosity prompted me to catch up with him though I was robbed of my breath in the process. His voluntary comment, that he was chasing a Parnassian which he failed to catch, made no sense to me. The Parnassians, he explained with a grin and youthful sparkle in his blue eyes, are rare Snow Butterflies. The gentleman was a tourist who was on a visit to Chitral, Kashmir and Malaysia with the express purpose of adding rare Asian Butterflies to his collection. This brief encounter with the 'blue-eyed Lepidopterist' leading to a stimulating introduction to Butterflies has held our fancy for these beautiful creatures for the last eight years. We, a husband-and-wife team of butterfly breeders, have spent some of our spare time in many a thrilling adventure in the fields, woods, gardens and mountains in search of butterflies and their caterpillars; studying their habits, larval food-plants, favourite flowers and their life histories. Many a winter morning we have spent looking for hibernating butterflies in tree-hollows. By recording our discoveries photographically we have been able to do away with the painful and destructive alternative of having large and space-consuming collections of mounted butterflies and dead caterpillars.

Rearing butterfly caterpillars at home provides an absorbing occupation for us; and the trials and vexations of rearing these young ones are forgotten the moment a new-born butterfly fearlessly leaves the safety of its perch and tenderly crawls on to an extended finger. And when it suddenly takes to its wings it takes our breath away with it!

Flying Palettes

In the world of insects, the beauty and variety of shapes, patterns, and colouration of wings of butterflies make them unrivalled for aesthetic appeal. No human genius has ever created anything lovelier. Poets, naturalists and the sentimentalists among the Lepidopterists have given fanciful names to butterflies: 'fluttering flowers', 'winged flowers', 'flowers that fly', 'velvet wings', 'flying palettes'! The zoologists call these frail children of the air Papilionina, one of the sub-groups of the order, or group, of insects which make up the Lepidoptera: comprising Moths, Skippers and Butterflies. The most attractive and best-known insects of this group are the butterflies. As a design motif this lovely symbol of daintiness and spring has been the favourite of artists—even in folk-art and folk-dances.

Three pearly eggs and a tiny newly hatched larva (arrow mark) on the tender leaf of citrus plant.
– Magnified X 10 –

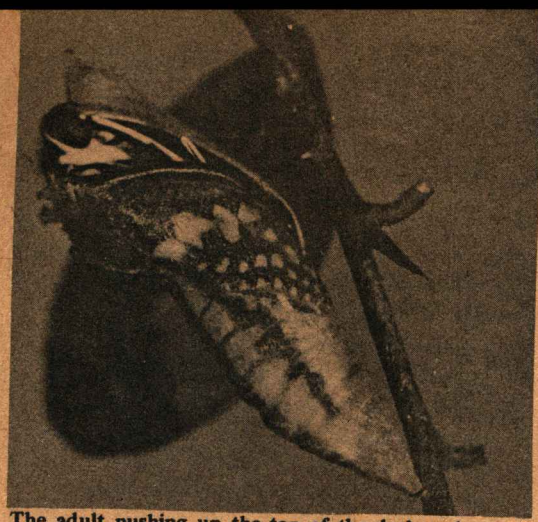


The quiescent pupa supported by its silken girdle and pad. With bumps and ridges on its shell it resembles a withered leaf and is thus well camouflaged in the insects' most defenceless stage of life. *– Magnified X 3 –*

A full grown worm-like caterpillar with protective markings and patterns on its green skin; it is in search of a suitable site for pupation.

Life has begun to stir in the pupal case and the pupal skin has just split behind the head. Traces of the structure of the adult are visible in shallow relief inside the translucent pupal skin.

Fully developed caterpillar, before the last moulting, preparing for pupation and the close of its earth bound existence. The claws on its abdomen tip are firmly hooked into a small silk pad and it is holding the nearly completed silk girdle-loop beneath its forelegs.



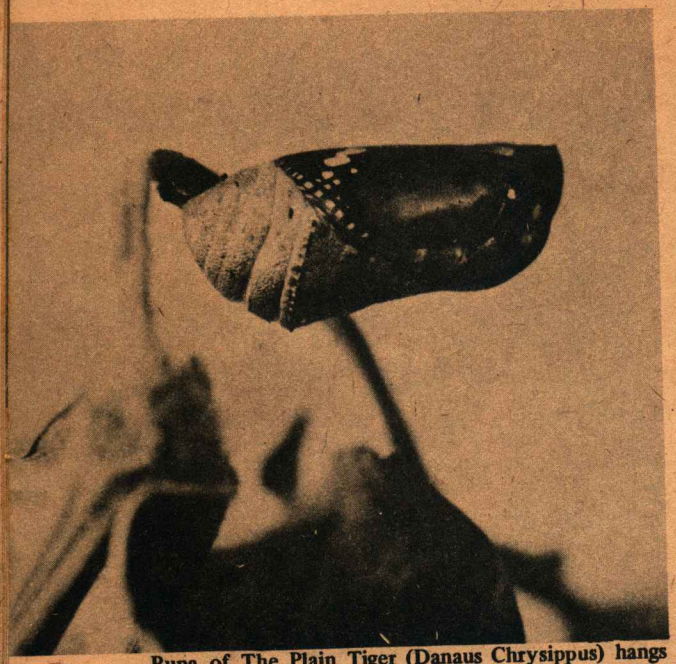
The adult pushing up the top of the darkened pupal case like a lid; portions of its antennae, head and legs are visible.

The sensitive antennae (feelers) and legs are nearly through though the wings and abdomen are still held prisoner in the pupal case.

The butterfly struggling to draw its wings and body out of the pupal skin.

The newly emerged butterfly on its frail legs, with partially expanded wings, crawling away from the discarded pupal skin. It is flexing and coiling its 'siphon-tongue'.

The gleaming adult Lime Butterfly, on a visit to a flower, soon after its first flight. The tongue is coiled in place and the beautiful wings are fully expanded.



Pupa of The Plain Tiger (Danaus Chrysippus) hangs from only a silk pad in which its tail end is firmly caught. Unlike the Lime Butterfly it has no additional silken girdle to support it. Wing pattern is showing through this pupa of imminently emerging butterfly.

The scientific name Lepidoptera means 'scaly-winged', one of the most obvious characteristics of these insects. It comes from the Greek words lepis (a scale) and pteron (a wing). Minute overlapping scales, which are modified hair, cover the membraneous wings of adult forms of butterflies, like rows of tiles on a roof. The scales which may also cover parts of the body of the insect are very soft and rub off like dust when the wings are touched. The scales vary in shape, size and colour and form the colour patterns of wings of various species, or kinds, of butterflies. Colours of the scales may be due to pigmentation or they may reflect iridescent hues due to diffraction of sunlight from closely spaced microscopical gratings, or grooves, on their surfaces. In many kinds of butterflies certain of the scales on the wings of males are specialised as scent distributing organs giving out pleasant scents which attract females of the species.

Butterflies have presumably derived their name from the common cream-coloured Cabbage Butterfly (Pieris brassicae). In the earliest Anglo-Saxon language they were called 'Buttor-fleage' meaning butter-fly. Butterflies are found in all lands of the world, from the snow-bound regions to the hottest deserts, and in tropical forests and in the plains, wherever flowering plants grow. But different kinds of butterflies survive in their own specific enrivonments where the particular food-plants on which their larvae, or caterpillars, feed are available. Around the world over 15,000 species of butterflies, divided into fourteen families, have been identified. In our own country nearly 1,450 species of butterflies have been identified. In India butterflies have their greatest development and diversity.

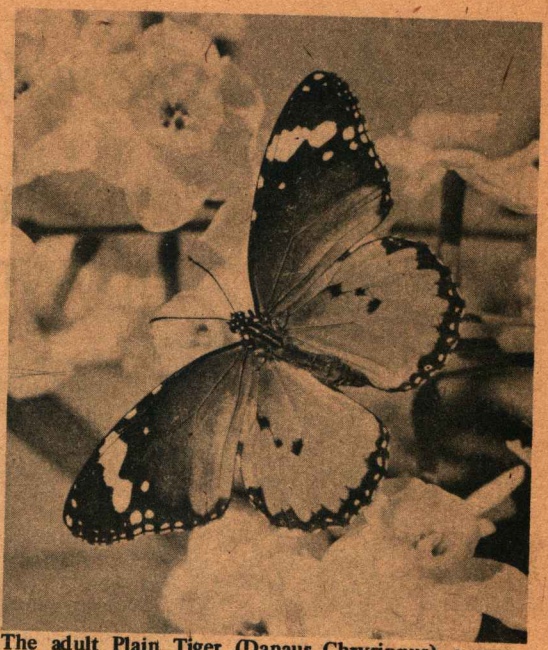
Human interference and destruction of wildlife habitats, by taking lands for buildings, ploughing up pasture-lands and waste-lands into third rate agricultural tracts, de-forestation, cutting down bushes, hedges and verges, has resulted in progressive deprivation of food sources and shelter for wildlife. Several species of butterflies also, like other wildlife, have either become extinct or rarer. Inspite of this, plenty of unknown kinds of butterflies are even today awaiting discovery and identification. We are still ignorant about the details of the lives and ecology of the great majority of even the presently known kinds of butterflies.

The Adult Butterfly

The adults, or imagines, of this amazing group of insects have assumed varying shapes, sizes and colours. Although their basic anatomical structure is like that of most winged insects, they enjoy some unique differentiations and characteristics. Adult butterflies cannot bite or chew. Their jaws are modified to form a drinking-straw-like siphon-tongue, an extensible proboscis, to suck-in flower nectar or other liquids on which the adult butterfly feeds. Uncoiling of the proboscis, in presence of suitable food, is controlled by very sensitive taste-buds on the soles of the butterfly's feet! When not feeding the proboscis is retracted and coiled-up like a watch spring under the head. A pair of antennae, or feelers, located between the eyes are the sensory organs which inform the butterfly about the feel, sound-waves, smell, temperature and humidity of the world around it.

The apparently fragile large decorative wings of the butterfly are strong and durable structures served by powerful muscles. The wing veins are linked together into a system that provides great strength and mechanical efficiency for flight.

The seemingly frail Painted Lady butterflies have been found to make the seemingly impossible journey from North Africa to Iceland, through storm-tossed regions lashed by rain and gale. The American Monarch Butterflies (Danaus plexippus) make annual migratory round-trip flights of over 3000 kilometres. Butterflies can fly at speeds of 20 kilometres per hour or faster if necessary.



The adult Plain Tiger (Danaus Chrysippus), a very hardy brown butterfly with white and black markings, which is common throughout India, is closely related to the famous North-American Monarch butterfly; its caterpillars feed on milk-weeds.

Life Cycle and Metamorphosis

To know something of the wonder of the butterfly's metamorphosis is to be introduced to an extraordinary wonder of life!

Like the more highly developed insects the butterflies also do not pass through a gradual series of changes in their development. They have a pronouncedly complete or "abrupt" metamorphosis: a phenomena of drastically interrupted recasting and remodelling through which this insect passes in its development from an egg, to a creeping worm-like larva (or popularly called caterpillar), then a dormant pupa, finally turning into a graceful winged butterfly. The process provides an efficient division of labour between the nutritional larval stage of the life-cycle and the adult stage, giving a single individual the increased ability to exploit different environments and sources of food to best advantage, to serve its variable needs and roles in its life.

A basic example of these seemingly incredible changes, in the life-histories of butterflies, may be witnessed in the **Lime Butterfly** (Papilio demoleus), one of the larger, ornamental, better known butterflies in our country. The female Lime Butterfly having mated, lays its minute pearly eggs singly on the tender leaves of the citrus plant. About ten days later tiny hardly visible larvae, or caterpillars, gnaw their way out from the egg shells. On hatching their first meal is their empty egg shell after which they begin to feed on the leaves of the plant on which they were born. Generally there is a specific larval food-plant for a particular species of butterfly; if this kind of food supply fails or the larvae are moved to other plants they refuse to eat and starve to death in the midst of abundant vegetation. The caterpillars are voracious feeders with powerful jaws; in about four weeks time they grow pencil-thick and nearly five centimetres in length. They live to eat and therefore grow so fast that they have to shed their old skins now grown tight and to provide bigger ones. This 'moulting' which is common to most growing insect larvae occurs five times till the caterpillar is full grown. Between successive moults, each time the caterpillar is ready to shed its skin, it becomes temporarily immobile and swallows large quantities of air and so inflates itself. The horny casing splits under pressure and the caterpillar wriggles out dressed in a new and larger-fitting coat; it eats the old skin, becomes active again and goes about feeding. The caterpillar has a procession of legs for creeping along, running or gaining a 'foot-hold' on the food plant.

Day of Transformation

The caterpillar eats enormous quantities of food so that all actual growth and storage of reserves is accomplished before reaching the pupal stage. To the adult sexually mature butterfly, whose main roles are reproduction and dispersal, solid food will have no meaning as there

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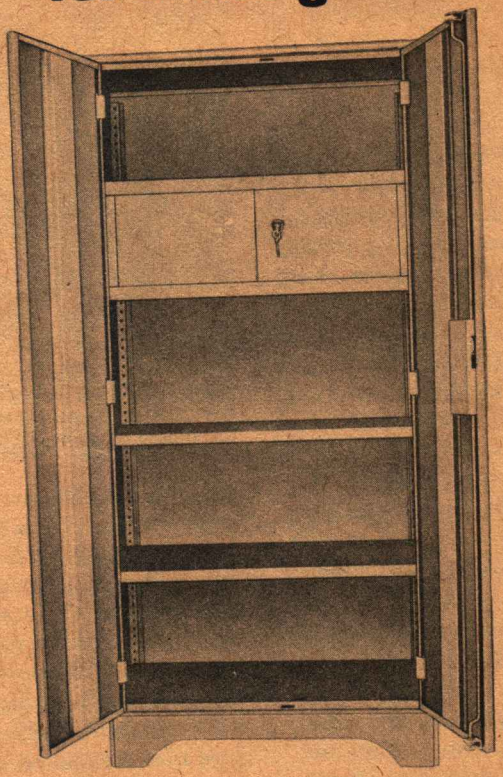

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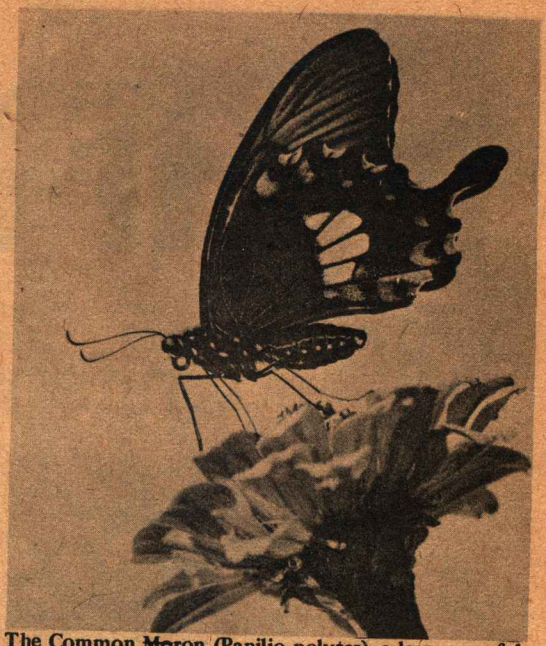
is no after-growth for it; it will survive on a bare minimum of liquid nectar of flowers or nutritious juices. By the last moulting the caterpillar has accomplished its full growth. It now looks like a colourful worm; a lonely and defenceless creature. Its protective colour, markings and patterns on the skin, merge it with the leaves and branches of the host plant. If disturbed, it will rear its head and project two bright red 'horns', at the same time emitting an overpowering smell of lemons. These protective devices are apparently sufficient to keep it reasonably safe from its smaller predatory enemies like bugs, beetles, spiders, wasps and dragonflies.

The fully developed caterpillar is ready to bid good-bye to "worm's days". After an enormous last meal in a short period of time, it stops feeding and suddenly becomes nomadic—very active, restless and wandering. The pupa is now developing within its outer skin and it must therefore explore and find a suitable place—firm leaf, plant stem or hard stable object—to pupate.



The Common Moron (Papilio polytes), a large graceful black 'Swallow-tail' butterfly which is abundant in woods and plains in the neighbourhood of orange-plantations and lime trees on which its caterpillars feed. A low flying butterfly, it prefers shelter of bushes and hedges.

Miracle of Metamorphosis

Preparation of pupation is an interesting and complicated process. Its movements now slowed down, the caterpillar spins a small silk pad on the spot chosen for pupation. When the pad is ready the caterpillar rests a short while and then hooks the claws of its rear legs firmly into it. This stage is common to most butterflies. But some, like the Lime Butterfly being described, also spin, in addition to the terminal abdominal spine (cremaster), a silk girdle which will pass around the body of the pupa and hold it more firmly in place head-upwards. After having firmly hooked its rear into place, the caterpillar starts moving its head slowly from side to side, carefully weaving a silken thread which it fixes at two points on its support beneath its front legs, to form a loop. The loop having been completed, the caterpillar rests a while with the strands of the loop held in its front legs. Then, wriggling violently, it passes its head down and through the loop, struggling to get the strands to the fourth crease of its thorax. The caterpillar now hangs at rest, securely supported by its silken girdle and pad. It has become shorter, thicker and darker in colour. Suddenly its skin at the back splits open from the top and it is pushed back towards the tail. The last moulting has occurred thereby revealing the final form of the pupa. The transformation is unbelievable; the pupa does not in the least resemble the caterpillar. The old discarded skin which is still encumbering the lower tip of the pupa is yet to be discarded. The pupa has no legs and no eyes but it manages to get rid of the old skin after a bit of acrobatic twisting, struggling and jumping, without losing its grip on the silk pad. **This is like a seemingly impossible feat which must be performed by a blind-folded person who is hanging from a horizontal bar by one gloved hand, and is required, without bringing the other hand into play, to remove the glove and, without falling, to grip the bar anew with the same hand!** Combination of silk pad, tail-hooks and girdle help in achieving this purpose. Finally the old skin is jerked away. The soft pupal skin takes some moments to harden and if damaged it would either fail to develop or produce a distorted and weak butterfly with poor chances of survival.

Although the surface of the now tough but flexible shell of the pupa, or chrysalis, appears lifeless, fierce biological activity leading to re-

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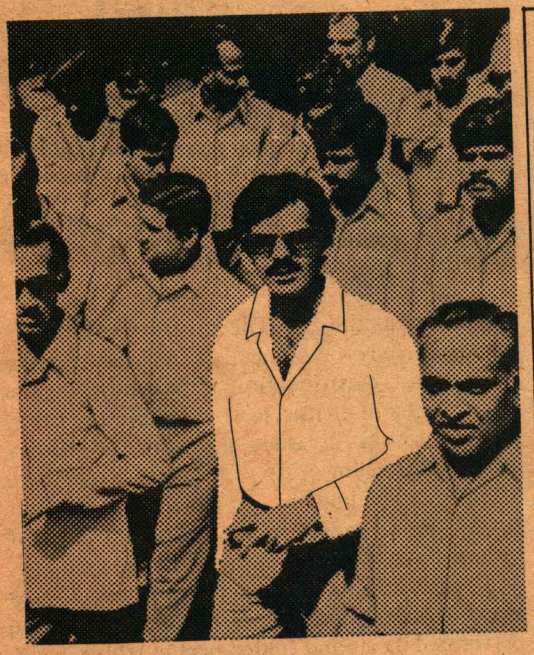

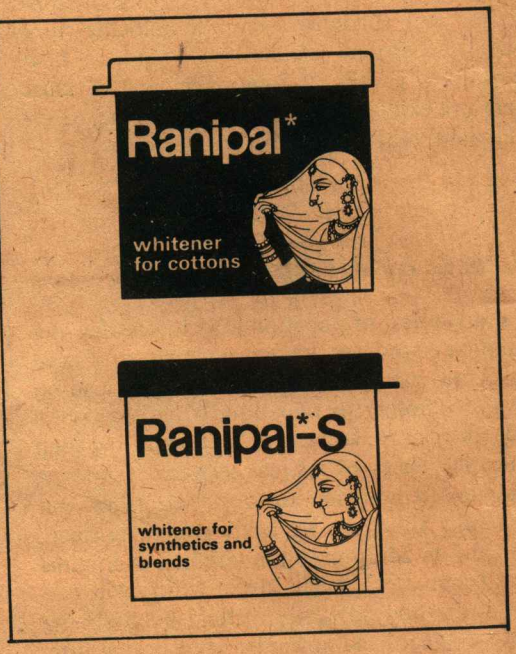

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arrangement of tissues is in progress inside the shell of the sleeping puppet where the adult butterfly is gradually forming. Within the pupal shell the sixteen stubby legs and pseudo-legs change into three pairs of jointed stilt-like legs; a sucking proboscis supplants the jaws, compound eyes replace single ones; wings and antennae sprout seemingly from nowhere. The day comes for the emergence of the butterfly, from the pupa. The interior of the translucent pupal-skin gradually darkens and structures of the adult butterfly in shallow relief become visible inside. This stage may last upto eighteen hours or so. Suddenly, life begins to stir in the pupal case. The first indication that the butterfly is preparing to emerge is shown by a series of fast and systematic splits of the pupal skin in well defined regions. Soon a leg or antennae appear. The leg paws the air seeking to establish contact with the outside surface of the pupal shell for a firm first foot-hold with the sharp claws of the legs. Following the legs and the antennae, the butterfly pulls its body and fleshy folds of wings free from the pupal shell and remains suspended from the empty shell. **So swift is its emergence from the pupa, completed within two minutes, that few people ever witness the marvellous event.** The newly emerged butterfly is a poor bedraggled trembling creature, with its small soft and flabby wings looking like wet folded parachutes. Its abdomen is swollen. Slowly it crawls on frail legs to the tip of its supporting leaf or branch. Here it hangs and suns itself, rapidly drawing the breath of life. Very soon the body fluids are pumped under pressure through the upper and lower membrances of the wings as well as their veins, forcing the wings to expand to their maximum size and to spread out. Simultaneously the scales on the wing surfaces come to lie flat like overlapping roof-tiles. It takes about two hours for the wings to dry and harden. A large drop of fluid, which is the waste-product stored within the butterfly during its development within the pupa, is discharged by the insect. Colour and radiance gradually descend on the little stranger. The gleaming adult releases its clinging-perch, takes its first flight, to seek nectar laden flowers and to seek a mate. More eggs will be laid and the whole life-cycle will start all over again.

Each phase of the mystifying series of transformations in the complete metamorphosis of the butterfly, from the tiny larva that feeds upon the leaves of a plant, grows into a soft ugly plodding caterpillar, becomes a mummy-like pupa and finally resurrects as a beautiful winged creature, is accomplished in a set period of time. Duration of each phase is affected by temperature, humidity, rain, light and sunshine. The patterns of changes are dictated by anatomical states which in turn are triggered by brain-controlled endocrine gland secretions: the moulting, growth and development hormones. Many of the ancient mystical misconceptions about metamorphosis amongst Lepidoptera have been cleared but we still do not understand the entire mystery of the phenomena because they touch on the solutions to the origins of life and living.

The Painted Lady (Vanessa cardui) has richly coloured pinky-orange wings. It is an alert butterfly with a peculiar habit of sudden doubling in its track and swift turns during flight. Well known for long distance migrations. Its caterpillars feed on thistles.

Behaviour

One may see a lot of butterfly-life in the course of rambles along paths in the woods or fields, and in flower gardens. Different kinds of butterflies feed, rest or mate during distinct times of the day. A female butterfly normally takes but one mate in her lifetime but the males are often polygamous. Butterflies do not usually

wander far from their local habitats and territories; only a few species are known to travel long distances or migrate in swarms. They are rarely gregarious. Seemingly gentle creatures, the males of many species of butterflies are aggressive; they patrol their regular territories and often dart fiercely at insects, small birds and other male butterflies that may venture into their domains.

Butterflies and Man

Butterflies do little harm to man; they spread no disease and no butterfly ever bites or stings. Very few of them feed on cultivated plants or trees or become pests. They are among nature's weakest creatures; the attacks of predatory and parasitic animals, bacterial, fungal and viral infections counterbalance their reproductive capacity and their population therefore remains low. Adult butterflies are useful as pollinators of food-crops and ornamental plants. And their aesthetic value to man cannot be denied.

Man, the 'lord of creation', must not continue to recklessly destroy the complex web of life on this planet by thoughtless destruction of plants and animal life, pollution of his natural enrivonment, and overuse of non-selective residual insecticides. Some of our wildlife including insects and butterflies have already become extinct and many more species are endangered. Ours would be a drab world without butterflies.

Conservation of Butterflies

Butterflies have a place, however insignificant, in the human equation for the conservation of wild life. There are some active groups in North America and Britain for the conservation of threatened species of butterflies. And a few butterflies enjoy traditional as well as legal protection in culturally different human societies. Ancient Greek art sometimes portrayed the human soul in the form of a butterfly. Similar beliefs are still held by many people all over the world. The Nagas of Assam hold that the spirits of the departed, after undergoing a cycle of changes in the subterranean world, are reborn on earth in the form of butterflies. The Angamis therefore abstain from injuring butterflies. At the more civilised level, the residents of the sunlit coastal city of Pacific Grove, California (USA) deserve to be acclaimed for the legal protection they afford to butterflies. During their mass migration, millions of Monarch Butterflies overwinter in and around Pacific Grove. The city passed an Ordinance in November 1938 declaring that it would be deemed a serious misdemeanour, punishable by a fine upto 500 dollars or possibly a six-month imprisonment or both, to molest or interfere with the Monarchs in any way during their annual visit to the city. The Ordinance is still in force. **THE END**

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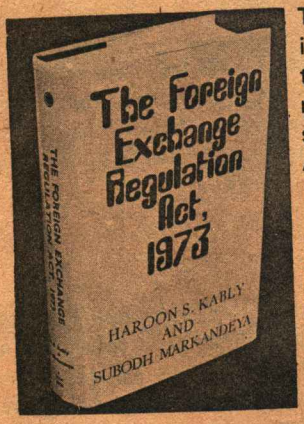

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THE RISE AND FALL OF MONEY

By John Kenneth Galbraith
from his book

THE AGE OF UNCERTAINTY*

MONEY is a singular thing. It ranks with love as man's greatest source of joy. And it ranks with death as his greatest source of anxiety. Over all history it has oppressed nearly all people in one of two ways: either it has been abundant and very unreliable, or reliable and very scarce. However, for many there has been a third affliction: for them money has been both unreliable and scarce.

For studying the full range of human emotion, the next best thing to the psychiatrist's couch is, perhaps, the modern supermarket. People entering or emerging from a supermarket are in the grip of their most common fears, are deeply sensitive, accordingly, to the political issues that bear upon this anxiety. In times of depression or recession they are wondering if their money will continue, if they will have any to spend the next time they step into a supermarket. In times of boom and inflation they are asking themselves if next time there will be anything to buy that they can still afford.

In recent years this last worry has been the worst. It is the special terror of the person whose days of work are over, whose income for the rest of life is given and will never, by any magic, increase. What if that money ceases to buy enough to sustain life or, what may be equally important, to maintain accustomed respectability? But there is equally the anxiety of the person who does not know whether next week's purchases will be supported by a job. Is a layoff in prospect? How long will the unemployment last? How will I, or we, get by?

The anxiety in the supermarket has its focus on money. It is one of the great uncertainties of life. It has been so for a long time. More than most things, an understanding of money requires an appreciation of its history. What was once simple has become complex. But if we see how money has evolved—if we take the complexities one by one as they were added by its history—an understanding of the final result is not so difficult. We see with fair ease the uncertainties of which it is the focus.

The Origins

Money has been an everyday fact of life for at least 2500 years. Herodotus, more or less as an afterthought and with a nice juxtaposition of concepts, tells of the invention of coined money in Asia Minor:

All of the young women of Lydia prostitute themselves, by which they procure their marriage portion . . . The

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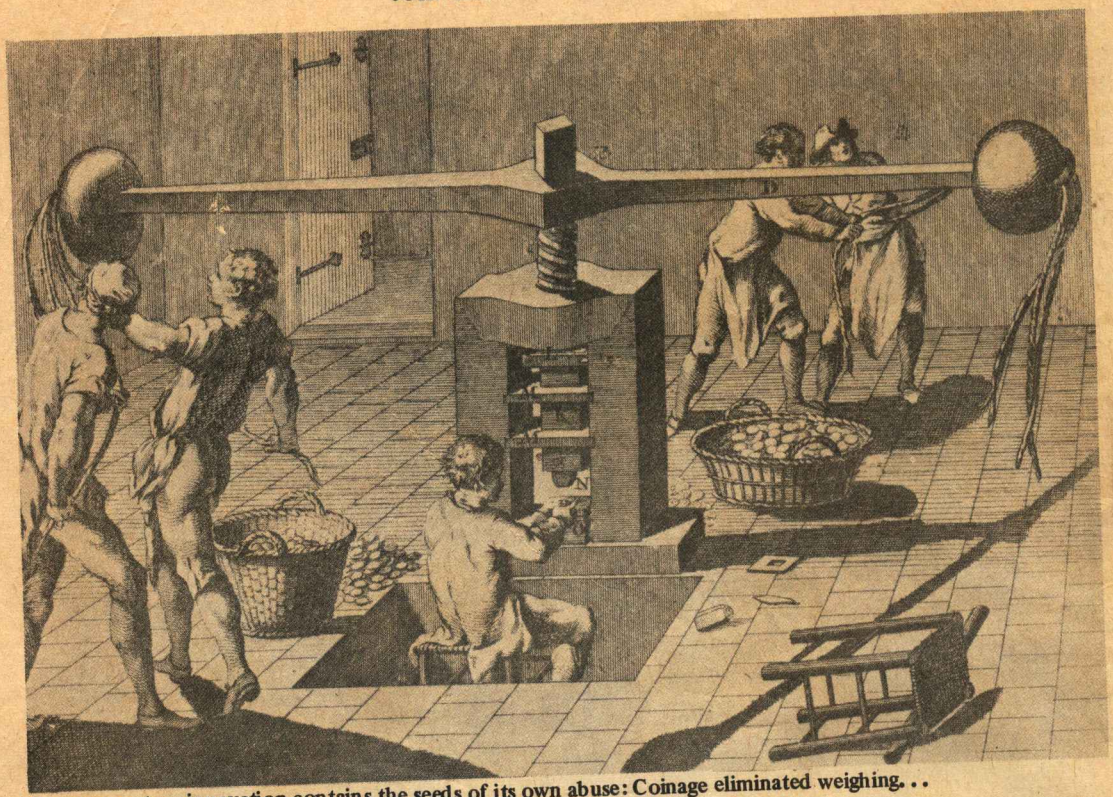

Every monetary innovation contains the seeds of its own abuse: Coinage eliminated weighing...

manners and customs of the Lydians do not essentially vary from those of Greece, except in this prostitution of the young women. They are the first people on record who coined gold and silver into money, and traded in retail.

It seems certain that there were much earlier experiences with coinage in the Indus Valley and China of which Herodotus was unaware.

For the next many centuries, a few brief episodes apart, no one receiving coined money could be quite sure what he or she was getting; few inventions ever lent themselves more profitably to abuse. The coin might be of its proclaimed weight of gold and silver. It might be less. It might have a lesser metal melted in. Banks and governments made promises to pay such coin as a substitute for money, and the promises then became money. Abuse of these promises was one of the few inventions more profitable than mistreating coins. The measure of the abuse was the grave uncertainty on the part of the recipient as to what he was getting and the counterpart uncertainty as to what that money would buy.

Then, in the last century, money became reliable. The major problems of its mismanagement seemed solved. What now became uncertain was the opportunity for earning it; jobs, farm prices, the earnings of the small businessman were anything but secure.

It was World War I that showed that the new reliability of money was an illusion. Along with the old political systems monetary stability also came unglued. There would be greater uncertainty than ever about getting money. And there would again be uncertainty as to what it would buy.

Most of us, whether we admit it or not, live with a linear view of history. We think that, over a long enough span of time, men learn, things improve. The history of money gives no support for this optimism.

The Function

Though one begins the history of money with the invention of coinage—the stamping or minting of pieces of metal of a specific (claimed) weight and quality—this is quite arbitrary. Cattle, shells, chunks of metal, whiskey, tobacco have also been used. They perform the essential function of

money, which is to avoid the awkwardness of barter—the natural difficulty of finding someone who wishes to trade cattle or whiskey directly for a house. What serves as money need only be durable, reasonably uniform and evident as to quality. It can then be held for a time and will be generally acceptable to buyers and sellers. Given these qualities, almost anything will serve as an intermediate stage in transactions. In nonpastoral societies it is also helpful if it can be carried or kept around the house. Coins came into use because they were durable, improved on chunks or sacks of gold and silver by being in predetermined amounts, and could be carried in a purse. Scales for weighing the metal were no longer needed, at least in the comparatively rare instances where the weight of the coins could be trusted.

Coins, although not many have noticed it, are now obsolescent. They no longer figure in major transactions. They survive only as minor change, for occasional nervous hoarding, as collectors' items and as an adjunct to slot machines. They are only an attenuated reminder, a souvenir, of what was once all money.

Banks and Money

After coins came banks. They flourished in Roman times, reached a high level of development in Venice, Florence and Genoa. With banks came the power, given to few private citizens, to create money. It may be why bankers are so solemn. A certain responsibility is involved. For a full view of banks and money the city to visit is Amsterdam. It is associated with not one but two of the great developments in their history.

In 1609, money—hard, coined money—was, as money goes, abundant in Amsterdam. Mostly it was silver, an important point. Through most of history silver, not gold, was the primary metal for coinage. Following the voyages of Columbus, silver mines of unparalleled richness had been discovered in the New World, principally in Mexico. In the sixteenth century this metal flooded into Europe to demonstrate one of the fundamental propositions regarding money: the more abundant the money, *everything else equal*, the less it will buy. As silver became abundant, prices are believed to have risen almost everywhere in Europe. A good many people who hadn't heard about the discovery of America saw its effects in the price of whatever trifle they had to buy.

Though silver and silver coins were abundant, another firm proposition concerning money was also demonstrated in these years. However much they have, people feel they can do with more of it. So everywhere in Europe men were taking the coins and sweating and clipping them, thereby getting metal to make more of them. In 1606, the Dutch Parliament had issued a manual for money changers. It listed 846 silver and gold coins, many of them appallingly deficient in weight and purity. Such was the state of abuse that no one, when he sold goods for money, could be sure what he was getting. It was to this problem of quality that the merchants of Amsterdam now addressed themselves. They created a bank owned by the city; the bank solved the problem of the quality of the coins by going back to the system that antedated the invention of coinage. That was weighing.

In this action the town fathers pioneered the idea of public regulation of the money supply by a public bank. A merchant brought his good and wretched coins to the bank, the bank weighed them, and the weight of the pure metal was then credited to his account. This deposit was a highly reliable form of money. A merchant could transfer it to the account of another merchant. The recipient knew that he was getting honest weight, nothing funny. Payments through the bank commanded a premium.

Then came the second Amsterdam discovery, although the principle was known elsewhere. The deposits so created did not need to be left idly in the bank. They could be lent. The bank then got interest. The borrower then had a deposit that *he* could spend. But the original deposit still stood to the credit of the original depositor. That too could be spent. Money, spendable money, had been created. Let no one rub his or her eyes. It's still being done—every day. The creation of money by a bank is as simple as this, so simple, I've often said, that the mind is slightly repelled.

The important thing, obviously, is that the original depositor and the borrower must never come at the same time for their deposits—their money. They must trust their bank. They must trust it to the extent of believing it isn't doing what it does as a matter of course. That is the thin edge on which creation of money by a bank always rests.

The Amsterdam Scene

In the first hundred years after the founding of the

bank, the city of Amsterdam grew wonderfully; the population and area greatly expanded. The arts—painting and music—flourished. After 1631, the city had a fair claim to being considered the center of the whole art world, for it was in that year that Rembrandt moved there from Leyden. The Merchant City, as we shall later see, was a place of great good taste. Amsterdam, the most eminent merchant city of its age, is very good evidence for the case. Many houses from this time survive. Some are still in the possession of the same families. One, that of the merchant Jan Six, is as lovely as any in Europe. Among the forty-odd paintings by Dutch masters still in the possession of the family are no fewer than three by Rembrandt. Rembrandt was a friend, and his name is prominent in the guest book of the time.

It is tempting to attribute the prosperity of Amsterdam and the consequent flowering of the artistic spirit to the excellence and stability of its financial institutions and particularly to the Bank of Amsterdam. There were other factors.

Amsterdam was admirably situated on what, with some canal-digging, became one of the outlets of the Rhine. It was, like all successful merchant cities, a tolerant place; men who wanted to make money could do business here regardless of race, creed or national origin. Much of Amsterdam's prosperity was the achievement of its large settlement of Huguenots and Portuguese and Spanish Jews. The city had a reputation for doing business with anyone who wished to do business, including, on occasion, those who might be fighting the Dutch. But, unquestionably, the Bank helped.

I should complete its story. As will now be evident, every monetary innovation or reform carries the seeds of some new abuse. So it was here. One of the important borrowers from the Bank was the Dutch East India Company. The members of the Company were often the same men who ran the Bank. With the passage of time, lending and borrowing became incestuous, even narcissistic. Nothing is new; the failure of the Franklin National Bank in New York in the nineteen-seventies, the London and County in the same years in England, was partly the result of bankers lending to business firms which they greatly admired and trusted because they were their own. In the eighteenth century the East India Company fell on hard times; there was war with England, ships did not come back. It was slow pay at first, and then its loans went into default. The making of loans and the creation of money by a bank, to repeat, is only possible if depositors do not come all at once for their money. If they suspect that they can't get their money, they will surely come. Suspected weakness ensures weakness.

John Law at High Noon. Dictator of French finance and Duc d'Arkansas.

Early in the last century suspicion spread, the weakness was affirmed. The depositors started coming, and they couldn't be paid. In 1819, after two centuries of service, the Bank of Amsterdam was wound up. By then, however, there had been a far more spectacular demonstration of how a bank can create money and how this ability can be abused.

Paris, 1719

Louis XIV died in 1715. His legacy to France was great and varied, and it included two major misfortunes. One was the French Treasury which was bankrupt; the other was the Regent, the Duc d'Orléans, who was intellectually and morally bankrupt. The result was the seemingly hopeless situation that gives opportunity to a rascal, someone who promises by magic or legerdemain to put everything right. Men who are desperate for a solution are easy to persuade be-

cause they wish desperately to be persuaded. The Duc d'Orléans was an especially easy case.

The available rascal we have already encountered. He was John Law, and to this day some historians regret the word rascal. Perhaps he was a genius who got carried away by his own achievements.

He had a background in financial matters. His father was a well-to-do Edinburgh goldsmith. In that time goldsmiths, since they had to have good strongboxes, stored valuables and coins for other people, and by this service had become bankers. On the Continent Law was engaged in selling an idea for a new kind of bank, the deposits of which would be secured by land rather than by silver or gold. He was also avoiding English justice; he had been unduly successful in a duel.

In Paris in 1716, he got permission from the Regent to establish a bank, the Banque Royale. As part of the bargain the bank took over the debts of the Regent and of the realm. These debts were then paid off with notes of the bank, promises by the bank to pay off the face value to the holders in silver or gold. It is not hard to see how the Regent was persuaded.

Then in 1717, Law organized the Company of the West, later the Company of the Indies but known ever afterward as the Mississippi Company. There was no doubt as to its assets; potentially they were greater than those of any company before or since. It held absolute title to all land north from the Gulf of Mexico to Minnesota and east from the Rockies to the Alleghenies.

This spacious endowment served Law's purposes in two ways. The notes that his bank was issuing were backed, as noted, by gold and silver. The needs of the Regent being large, so was the issue of notes. By no stretch of the imagination was there enough gold and silver in France to redeem the notes, so the imagination of the noteholders was stretched to include Louisiana. There, it was said, gold and silver were in unlimited supply. Maps of the period showed the mines, although no one has seen them since. The nonexistent metal in the imaginary mines was the backing for the notes.

But Parisians were by now in a trusting mood. Hearing of these conceptual riches and that colonization was under way to get them, they rushed to buy the stock of the Company of the West. The stock boomed. Law helped the price along by sundry forms of thimblerigging and fiduciary levitation. In a strong market some well-timed purchases of stock, in combination with some suitably reckless promises, will send up prices and attract the buyers who will send them up much more. By 1719, the boom had become a wild speculation. The price of the stock went up, sometimes by the hour. The old Paris Bourse was outdoors in the Rue Quincampoix. The excitement was intense and even violent, and the noise was hideous. Crowds swarmed also to the Place Vendôme, to Law's headquarters. Some hoped only to catch a glimpse of him; some, on one pretext or another, tried to get inside. Those who got inside asked Law to sell them stock. Women investors, the histories tell, offered themselves as an added inducement. This must have been an unprecedented experience for someone from Scotland.

The year 1719 in Paris was truly a wonderful time. Law's notes went out by the hundreds of millions. Government creditors who were paid off in the notes then rushed to buy stock in the Banque Royale or in the Mississippi Company. From the money so invested more could be lent to the government, yet more notes could go out and yet more stock could be sold. It was a complete closed-circle system for recycling worthless paper. In consequence, all involved were getting rich—on or in paper. It is to that year that we owe the useful French word "millionaire."

In 1719, John Law was the most famous man in all France. He was ennobled as the Duc d'Arkansas; on January 5, 1720, he was made Comptroller General of France, the supreme arbiter of all French finances.

There was no way to go but down, and presently this became evident. Doubts began to develop about the notes. So people started bringing them to the Banque Royale for the silver and gold that were still in Louisiana, and also not there. The Prince de Conti sent three wagons to carry back the gold to which his notes entitled him. Paying off the notes in gold and silver was suspended; in modern terms, the Banque Royale went off the gold (and silver) standard. And, in a further, rather severe step, ownership of precious metals except in small quantities was made a crime. But nothing could disguise the elementary fact that the Banque Royale could not pay, that the notes were now worthless. Law only narrowly escaped from Paris with his life. Parisians got what pleasure they could from a song that recommended that the paper be put to the most vulgar possible use.

Law's colonization and gold mining had not been attractive to the average Parisian. Press

gangs, accordingly, had been sent out to round up sundry vagabonds and even reputable citizens who were not sufficiently aware of their opportunities abroad. There was a special need for wives and a special effort to recruit what were then called women of medium virtue. Paris, in my youth, was considered a place of imaginative wickedness, a reputation long ago lost to Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Times Square. But there are still links with the past. The Rue Quincampoix is today a minor resort of women of medium virtue.

Though the end was unhappy, something was accomplished. Like the deposits in Amsterdam, Law's notes were money created by a bank. This money got the Regent out of a tight spot, encouraged colonization and made France prosperous, atleast for a while. Law—a somewhat neglected point—had directed a substantial amount into canal building and other useful public works. Issued in excess, the notes clearly were a disaster. Used in moderation, might they not do good? That, now, the British were to prove.

William Paterson, 1658-1719. Founder of the Bank of England.

The Bank of England

SOME of the most interesting observations on John Law we owe to the Duc de Saint-Simon, the relentless chronicler of life at Versailles and in Paris during the reign of Louis XIV and after. He thought Law's bank was a good idea for any country but France. The French, he said, lacked restraint.

There is much to his case. Twenty years earlier, a fellow countryman of Law's, one William Paterson—on money, as on political economy, the early pre-eminence of the Scotch is unchallenged—had sold essentially the same idea as the Banque Royale to William of Orange. William too needed money; his debts came not from succeeding Louis but from fighting him. In 1694, the Bank of England was formed; its founders subscribed the money the King needed. In return, they were given the right to make loans to others with newly issued notes backed by the King's promise to pay. Paterson soon left, most likely, it now seems, over a conflict of interest. He was promoting a rival bank. A few years later Scotchmen were seized with the notion that vast fortunes could be made by founding a colony (Darien) near what is now the Isthmus of Panama. It was thought, rightly, to be a strategic location. Few survived the climate and the fever. Paterson was the leading promoter of the Darien adventure. He lost his wife and children there and barely escaped with his own life.

But Paterson's bank survived and flourished, and no financial institution before or since has had such prestige. To be a member of its Court of Directors still suggests grave financial wisdom and ominous economic power. The power can be questioned. Outside directors are not told of important decisions until after they are taken. This ensures against conflict of interest, a matter on which the Bank is still vigilant. It does reduce appreciably a man's impact on the decision.

The glow extends across the seas, continues down through the generations. In the United States in past years, the Federal Reserve Board has regularly been used by American presidents as a place of deposit for men who could not reliably be trusted to balance their own checkbooks. Once in office, they are addressed with reverence as Governor and dispense deeply ambiguous judgments on the economic and financial prospect, which susceptible journalists, bankers and economists treat with the utmost respect. However illiterate, economically or otherwise, they are sustained by the reputation of the Bank of England.

In the early years of the eighteenth century the Bank was saved from a principal role in the South Sea Bubble because the South Sea Company outbid it in recklessness. Later it was thought far too generous in its loans to Pitt for the wars against Napoleon. David Ricardo held this view, although neither Ricardo nor his fellow critics offered any better ideas about where to raise the money. But, in time, the Bank became an accomplished instrument for regulating the creation of money by lesser banks—in placing limits on lending and consequent deposit expansion and note issue. In doing so, it provided the restraint that, in its absence, had brought misfortune in Amsterdam, disaster in Paris.

As the creation of money—deposits and bank notes—by banks is a simple thing, so is the mechanism for its control. In London in the eighteenth century the goldsmiths, now become the banks, made loans in notes against their holdings of gold and silver coin. The Bank of England, when it received these notes, returned them for collection in gold or silver. This required the banks to maintain reasonable reserves of cash against their note issues. They could not be reckless in the issue of notes as was Law. Later the Bank acquired for itself a monopoly of note issue, first in London, then throughout the country. It had then only to discipline itself.

The subordinate or commercial banks could still lend the funds of their depositors. This would mean deposits—money—for those who borrowed. And this money-creation could be carried to excess. The Bank of England developed a method for preventing this. When the ordinary or commercial banks seemed too generous with their loans, the Bank allowed some of its own loans to run out or it sold some of the securities it held. In repaying these loans or paying for their securities, customers of the commercial banks would transfer gold and silver from the vaults of the ordinary banks to the Bank of England. The reserves in gold and silver of the commercial banks, their protection in case depositors came for their money, would thus be depleted. Their lending and associated deposit- and money-creation would then have to be curtailed. This is the procedure now celebrated as open market operations. Another simple thing. The clearing banks, as the commercial banks are called in Britain, could replace their depleted reserves by borrowing from the Bank of England. But that could be restrained by raising the rate of interest. This charge by the Bank of England came to be called the Bank Rate, in the last century a mysterious and wonderful thing. In the United States the Bank Rate is the rediscount rate or, latterly, the discount rate.

Such were the regulatory functions as developed by the Bank of England. It found for itself one other major purpose. Recurrently there were the moments of fear and suspicion when depositors came to the clearing banks for their money, for the cash that by the nature of banking was not sufficiently there. The Bank of England would then come to the rescue and lend to the clearing banks, though at a rather stiff rate. The central bank, as banks for other bankers came to be called, served these other banks as the lender of last resort.

It wasn't always easy to rise above the panic that sent people to the clearing banks for their money and these in turn to the Bank of England. Pessimism had a way of infecting everyone, including the great men at the Bank. But it was even harder for them to fall below euphoria when, as recurrently happened, that swept the City and England. In 1720, there was a vast outbreak of company promotions with much speculation in their shares. Trade with Spanish America was the focus of excitement but there was also a notable company "for carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody to know what it is." All these promotions were the South Sea Bubble, and the Bank of England narrowly escaped involvement. A century later, in 1824, there was another wave of speculative enthusiasm, again over investment prospects in South America. Again, there was diversification. Englishmen could invest in a company "to drain the Red Sea with a view to recovering the treasure abandoned by the Egyptians after the crossing of the Jews." Again the Bank was captured by the spirit of the times and did not curb the more insane lending by the banks. It's the old question: who regulates the regulators? Who is king in the world of the blind when there isn't even a one-eyed man? The problem will recur.

Still, in the last century the Bank of England showed a remarkable capacity for economic innovation. All of the functions of a modern central bank were identified and developed. Not surprisingly, then, its operations were viewed with admiration, even as high art. Victorians heard with grave attention that the Bank Rate had been raised. They did not know what it meant. But they knew that it was an act of extreme wisdom.

Paper Money

Coinage was the invention of the Greeks. The Italians, Dutch, French and English, including always the Scotch, were the developers of banks and central banking. We come now to paper money. This, in singular measure, was the gift of Americans and Canadians to the Western world.

The American colonies, all know, were greatly opposed to taxation without representation. They were also, a less celebrated quality, equally opposed to taxation with representation. It was out of this opposition to taxation that government paper money was born. The birthplace was Massachusetts; the year was 1690. Massachusetts soldiers had just returned from an unsuccessful expedition against Quebec. The loot from the fortress was to have been their pay but there was a miscalculation; Quebec did not fall. Angry soldiers can be a source of unease. So, in the absence of real money—gold or silver—they were given promises of such money instead. These promissory notes then passed from hand to hand as money.

It seemed a most painless way to pay bills. The other colonies followed suit; some, notably Rhode Island and South Carolina, issued notes in huge volume. Any thought of eventual redemption was a mirage. But the restraint that the Duc de Saint-Simon thought lacking in the French was not entirely absent in America. In the Middle Colonies—Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York—in the century before the Revolution, paper money was issued and used with good sense. It was kept reasonably scarce, its redemption in gold or silver continued to seem plausible and thus it was kept acceptable. In the view of modern historians, it was not only convenient for trade but saved these colonists from falling prices with the consequent adverse effect on business.

The prime exponent of paper money in these years was Benjamin Franklin. He thought it a good and useful thing, and his advocacy had an intensely practical touch. He printed money for the colonial governments on his own printing press.

In London this colonial invention of paper money seemed, in contrast, a most foolish contrivance. So, toward the middle of the eighteenth century, Parliament forbade further issues of it in peacetime. Franklin journeyed to London to oppose the prohibition but was unsuccessful. The action caused much resentment in the colonies, almost as much as the taxes. This grievance has never had much standing in American history. The sound men of the colonies thought that Parliament was absolutely right. So, for a long time, did the reputable historians.

The Canadian Variant

In all countries of the world—Communist, capitalist and those which only dream of such distinction—the convention as regards paper money is now the same. It requires a rectangular slip of paper covered with suitable swirls of ink and featuring a dead hero, a Rubens figure, a cornucopia of vegetables or an heroic monument. This is partly an accident. In the development of paper money, governments followed the dull puritanical model of Massachusetts, not the irreverent and sparkling example of New France.

The Quebec model was the playing card. The French, as all know, were casual about their North American colonies. Ships and money often failed to arrive. When this happened and in roughly the same year as the Massachusetts attack, the intendants at Quebec also paid the garrison and for their supplies with promises. The most readily available and durable paper stock was playing cards. These became the promises by virtue of having the official government signature attached. Then when the ships came in, the cards were redeemed in gold or silver. The innovation shocked Versailles but, eventually, there being no better alternative, it was accepted. In a 1711 issue, spades and clubs were the currency of highest denomination; hearts and diamonds had only half their value.

As with all currencies, if too many cards were dealt, inflation resulted. In the last days of New France this happened. The pressure of need was great, the means for redemption small. At the end, the purchasing power of the cards was greatly diminished.

All must weep that, after Wolfe met Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham, this currency came to an end. Its survival would everywhere have lightened and informed financial life. At Las Vegas men and women would now play for and with the same currency. Anyone making a killing on the stock market would be rewarded in clubs and spades. A reference to gambling in Wall Street would not be a metaphor. The innocent, looking at the money they would get, would be duly warned.

Paper and Revolution

If one is planning a revolution, he should first, no doubt, get a cause and an army. Then, based on all experience, he—or she—should get a printing press. Revolutionary governments cannot easily levy taxes, especially if the revolt is against bad taxes. Their credit is not likely to be good so they cannot borrow. There remains only the printing of money.

Money so printed paid for the Russian Revolution. Likewise for the revolt of the Confederate States. Likewise for the French Revolution—the famous assignats were issued against the security of the church land and that of the nobility. And paper money, the invention of the colonies, paid for the American Revolution.

Some was issued by the states. The rest, the Continental notes, were authorized by the Continental Congress. A half billion dollars worth altogether was put in circulation. The predictable result, as at Quebec, was inflation: by the end of the war a pair of shoes cost about five thousand dollars in Virginia, a full outfit around a million. But there was no alternative. Taxes could not have paid for the war. Even had the erstwhile colonists been willing, collection would have been difficult. No one thought the new republic even a passable credit risk. Paper money saved the day.

This too has never been recognized. When the war was won, the sound-money men wrote the history. They could not have it said that the United States was conceived in financial sin. So they held that the financing of the Revolution was a terrible mistake, without ever explaining what would have been both practical and right. Their view persists. The Continental note has come down to us only as a symbol of opprobrium. "Not worth a Continental!" If properly treated, it would have a place beside the Liberty Bell. The historians even edited Benjamin Franklin. His position on paper money is rarely mentioned. Children are told only that he was a good man in diplomacy, thrift and electricity.

Banks and the Central Banks

Though paper money financed the Revolution, the resulting inflation bred remorse; this has been, through history, a highly reliable result of runaway prices. There were vows that it would not happen again. In consequence, the Constitution of the United States prohibited the states from issuing paper money, even as the Westminster Parliament had done. It also, more remarkably, forbade the Federal Government to do so too. Only by a very strained interpretation of the Constitution, and after paper money—the Greenbacks—had been issued in volume during the Civil War, was such money made legal in the United States.

Banks had also been prohibited in the colonies by the British. With independence these were now legal, and, as we have sufficiently seen, they too manufactured money. And while the issue of paper money by a governmeent had to await action by a legislature, the issue of money by a bank did not. Almost anyone could do it on very short notice and even smaller capital, and the results were wonderful. The proprietor could print notes and make loans in these notes to his friends, neighbors or himself. The notes, with luck, would be accepted in payment for horses, cattle, machinery, an anvil and forge or the initial small stock of a grocery or hardware store. The borrower would then be in business. Perhaps, with more luck, he would be able to pay off his loan. A wonderful thing, a bank. The citizens of the new republic discovered banking as an adolescent discovers sex.

There were objections, however, from the people who got the notes—from the Eastern merchants to whom they came for payment of accounts, from the more conservative Eastern bankers to whom they came for deposit. When the notes were returned for collection of the gold or silver they promised, the issuing banks were often indifferent and frequently not to be found. The Easterners wanted money that could be sent to England to buy goods and that did not lose its value from one day to the next. The obvious solution was to have a central bank on the model of the Bank of England to keep these new banks in line. No one doubted the pre-eminence of the British in financial matters. George Washington might have fought the Redcoats. But he left Barings, the great London bank, in charge of his personal finances throughout the war, and Barings did not let him down.

The Bank of England, we have seen, disciplined its subordinate banks by presenting their notes systematically for collection in silver or gold. Thus it required them to keep their loans and resulting deposits in some reasonably safe relationship to their hard cash. This would be the basic function of an American central bank. It

could impose discipline and restraint on the local banks by similarly presenting their notes for collection. It was a function that the banks on the frontier thought less than necessary. They would have to make good on their bad money. And their purpose, however it might be denied, was to issue bad money for whatever it might buy.

Here were the seeds of the most persistent political conflict in American history and, after slavery, the most bitter. It was between the men who wanted good money and those who wanted the bad money that put them in business. It began with Alexander Hamilton when he redeemed the Continental notes at the distinctly extravagant rate of one cent on the dollar, the act of a sound-money man. It was continued when the First Bank of the United States was established in accordance with Hamilton's recommendations and incurred so much displeasure for its discipline that its charter in 1810 was allowed to lapse. The struggle did not end until the defeat of William Jennings Bryan in the presidential election of 1896, and there were many echoes as late as the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Its high point was in the eighteen-thirties—the titanic struggle between Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, and Nicholas Biddle, President of the Second Bank of the United States.

Jackson versus Biddle

The President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, was from the frontier—Tennessee. His rough appearance and manner are part of the legend and were, for a long time, a damaging model for politicians from the West. Nicholas Biddle, polished, well-dressed, well-bathed, slightly bejeweled, was pre-eminently a member of the Establishment, as the Biddles of Philadelphia have been ever since. Writing home to his mother of his American travels, the eventual Edward VII told, after his visit to Philadelphia, of a most distinguished family called Scrapple, a most appetizing breakfast dish called biddle.

Biddle lacked the tact that the rich and successful have since developed greatly and which has perhaps become second nature. On public occasions he compared his power as President of the Second Bank of the United States with that of the President of the United States. When asked by a Senate committee if he had ever abused his financial power, he praised his own restraint. Although very few of the small banks "might not have been destroyed" by his discipline, "none has ever been injured." This allowed Jackson to thunder back: "The President of the Bank has told us that most of the State banks exist by its forbearance."

The historic showdown came in 1832. Early that year the friends of the Bank in Congress led by Henry Clay—Clay was also from the frontier but the forces of civilization had worked their way—renewed the charter of the Bank. Jackson responded with a stinging veto. The presidential election was then fought on the issue. Biddle had the money, and he had been generous with loans to congressmen, senators and the press. Andrew Jackson had the votes. He won, and the Second Bank of the United States was defeated. Biddle then got it a Pennsylvania charter but power is often a onetime thing. Very soon he went broke. The smaller local banks were to remain free from serious restraint in many of the states for a century.

Once Biddle's hand had been lifted, these state banks exploded in number. To have a bank in the eighteen-thirties became, almost literally, a human right. Many were well managed. But for many the more remote the crossroads, the deeper the forest, the more desolate the swamp, the more attractive the location. For a remote or obscure address diminished the likelihood that the notes issued by the bank would ever find their way back for collection. There was state regulation but it was far from reliable. In Michigan, where the history is better than elsewhere, the banks were required to maintain a minimum reserve of gold and silver against their notes. Boxes of coins were sent around through the forest just in front of the commissioners who were sent out to enforce the law. As an act of economy, a thin layer of gold was once found to be covering a thick deposit of broken glass. In conservative Massachusetts in these years a bank failed. Against notes of $500,000 outstanding, it had cash reserves of $86.48. By the time of the Civil War some 7000 different kinds of bank notes were in circulation in the United States; to these, numerous artists with access to a printing press had added another 5000 that were counterfeit. Legal or bogus, the purchasing power was often about the same, meaning nil.

It was too confusing, and in 1865, a few weeks before Appomattox, the right of the small banks—those chartered by the states—to issue notes was finally abolished. But by then bank deposits and bank checks were taking the place of hand-to-hand money. Nothing prevented the

banks from creating money by making loans and creating deposits. This they continued to do. Often it was in the same open-handed way that they had made the loans that were taken away in bank notes.

Gold

THE UNITED STATES in the last century was, or seemed on money to be, a maverick case. While wildcat banking flourished, especially on the American frontier, the major countries of Europe were accepting the lessons of Britain and the Bank of England on how banking should be regulated. They were also resolving, it seemed for all time, the question of the kind of metal into which bank notes, bank deposits and government notes would be converted. Silver and gold had for centuries been in competition. It was confusing to have two metals; they changed in value in relation to each other, and the one that was cheaper always got passed on. The one of more value people held. In 1867, the leading nations of Europe met in Paris and resolved that, henceforth, their business would all be done in gold.

The course of events in the United States was different. The Civil War, like the Revolutionary War, had been financed (though much less extensively) by paper money. When prices fell after the war, there were powerful demands, particularly from the farmers, that the Greenbacks be retained. And when great deposits of silver were later discovered in the West, the miners joined with the farmers in a crusade to keep silver. William Jennings Bryan, in memorable oratory, invoked Jesus and the Crucifixion against gold.

But eventually even the United States conformed. By the turn of the century the Greenbackers belonged to history. Bryan had been defeated on the issue of free coinage of silver. Then in the United States, as in Europe, gold became the only metal into which other money, if good, could be converted, and this convertibility was now general. In Western countries the gold standard, as such convertibility is called, was almost everywhere the rule.

Although the impression is now to the contrary, the gold standard was in effect only for a few years. World War I swept the gold out of Europe to buy munitions. This destroyed the gold standard there. It brought gold to the United States in such plenitude that it was far too abundant to serve as money here. The gold standard never functioned effectively again. It too was a prime casualty of the great ungluing.

Uncertainty: Old and New

A world in which all money could be exchanged into gold coins or their equivalent has always seemed marvelously certain. Whatever its defects, there was, indeed, a high certainty about what such money could buy. Over the whole of the last century prices fell, the purchasing power of gold or gold-based money increased.

This certainty, a sadly neglected point, was always greatest for those with money. When the Bank of England raised the Bank Rate or moved otherwise to restrain the banks and ensure that they would have the gold to meet the demands of their depositors, business firms were denied loans. In further consequence, prices fell and jobs were lost. For the farmers and workers so affected, the gold standard was a source of insecurity. The purchasing power of the money was maintained; it was only that they now had less or none. The difference was that, unlike the rich, these citizens were inarticulate and usually innocent of the causes of their misfortune. (On this matter American farmers were much less innocent than most.) Latter-day admirers of the gold standard, and of stern monetary management in general, have but rarely understood that its success in the last century owed much to the helplessness of those who were subject to its discipline. As economic life expanded in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, so did the number of workers who were subject to the uncertainty of employment and income that went with sound central-banking practice. So did the unwillingness to accept it. To the consequences of this I will return.

The United States, we have seen, rejected central banks and opted instead for giving the local banker the right to create the bank notes and the bank deposits that put the local farmers and merchants in business. This too had its uncertainties, and these too were severe. Banks would be created; the loans of the new banks and the old would finance a euphoric speculation in land, canals, railroads, commodities or industrial shares. Then would come the crash, and the banks would fail by the score. This cycle continued on into the present century with increasing severity. From crash to crash was usually around twenty years—just time for the memory of the last disaster to fade. Each boom was duly

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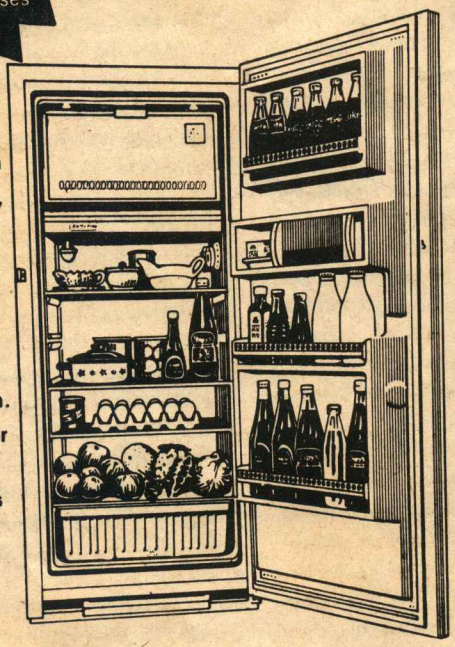

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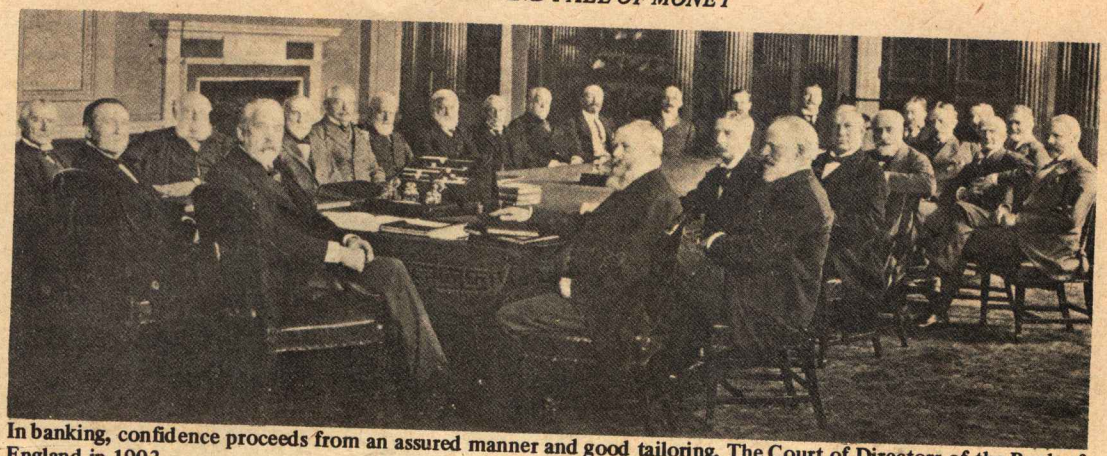

In banking, confidence proceeds from an assured manner and good tailoring. The Court of Directors of the Bank of England in 1903.

heralded as the response to a new era; doubters were invariably dismissed as men incapable of appreciating the opportunities for gain by which those of true vision were being enriched. After each crash politicians called for confidence. Things were much better than they seemed. Men of financial wisdom counselled patience and, on occasion, prayer. In the panic of 1907, J. P. Morgan took an even more forthright step. He called together the Protestant clergymen of New York City and adjured them to tell their congregations the next Sunday to leave their money in the banks. It was a time for affirming faith, and that included faith in the banking system.

Despite such calming counsel, when panic struck, prices fell, men lost their jobs and banks failed. The bank failures added greatly to the severity of the crash. For then deposits in failed banks were no longer usable money; people no longer had it to spend. This had an astringent effect on business. And the surviving banks, now suffering badly from fright, ceased making the loans that created money. The monetary system was thus superbly arranged to cancel or reduce the money supply precisely when this would do the most to make things worse.

The culminating crash came in 1929. In the next four years around nine thousand banks bit the dust, a third of all the banks in the country. With each failure individuals and companies lost money they would otherwise have spent, loans they would otherwise have received. And the surviving banks battened down against the day when their depositors would come. Then, on March 6, 1933, all the banks in the United States were closed. Except for what little was in hand, the money came to a full stop. Ten years before, Germany had been buried in an avalanche of reichsmarks in an inflation that is not forgotten to this day. Finally it stabilized at a thousand billion of the old currency to one of the new. Now the United States, for practical purposes, had no money. It cannot be doubted that, after 2500 years, there was still much to be learned about the management of money.

The Federal Reserve System

This was a saddening discovery. In 1914, the gold standard had seemed forever. So also in that year it seemed that the uncertainties of the American banking system, those that produced the continuing cycles of boom and bust, had finally been corrected. On almost exactly the day that the guns of August began to sound, the victory of Andrew Jackson over the Eastern financial establishment was finally reversed. The United States set up a central bank. More exactly, in a compromise designed to overcome the old hostility, it established twelve central banks and a co-ordinating body of ill-defined power in Washington. This was the Federal Reserve System.

The Federal Reserve System has always been greatly loved by economists; it even has a nasty but affectionate nickname, The Fed. There was little to be loved in its early performance. No one knew for sure who was in charge—Washington, the regional Banks in Kansas City, St. Louis, San Francisco. Or was it the New York Bank with its special advantage of being in the financial capital?

More serious was an instinct, one that was evident in the earliest days of the Bank of England, for whatever action made things worse. In the

she loves the lion in him

Yearning for his warmth on a chilly, windy, winter eve,
that's me! I love, simply adore, his majesty, his grace.
What personality!!
Wow!! Roar!! Regale!!!
Utterly masculine. All the more, in his modella Suitings.
Such style, such feel, my, my! He is all mine and mine alone.
Call me the possessive, jealous type,
if you like. You too, leap like
a lion to the Lion's Den.
That is where modella is.

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SUITINGS

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years following World War I, there was sharp speculation in farm commodities and farm real estate—the boom of 1919–20. The Federal Reserve Banks looked on tolerantly while banks made the loans that financed this boom. Then came the crash of 1920–21. Now the Federal Reserve clamped down on bank lending and helped to make the resulting depression worse. In 1927, as the great stock market boom was getting under way, it eased credit. This helped finance the stock market boom and thus made more severe the crash of 1929, although other factors were more important. After the Crash, during the great deflation of 1929–32, the Federal Reserve continued to worry about inflation. In these years banks were falling like the soldiers on that morning at the Somme. The Federal Reserve was indifferent to their fate, even to that of its own members. The idea of the lender of last resort had not crossed the Atlantic.

However, the prestige of the Federal Reserve remained undimmed. The head of the New York Federal Reserve Bank over much of this period was one Benjamin Strong; he was the first American central banker since Nicholas Biddle whose name was known. Strong owed his high reputation to the elegance of his errors. Men marveled that anyone should have the power to make such sophisticated mistakes. But this is an occupation where standards of performance are pleasantly relaxed. In central banking as in diplomacy, style, conservative tailoring and an easy association with the affluent count greatly and results for much less.

Gradually during the Depression interest rates were brought down; by 1931, the discount rate at the New York Reserve Bank—the rate at which banks could borrow—was 1.5 percent, hardly a usurious charge. The Federal Reserve also bought government bonds on a considerable scale, and the resulting cash went out to the banks—open market operations again. Soon the commercial banks were flush with lendable funds. All that remained was for customers to come to the banks, borrow money, increase deposits and enhance therewith the money supply. Recovery would then be prompt. Now came a terrible discovery. The customers wouldn't come. Even at the lowest rate they didn't think they could make money. The banks wouldn't trust those who were so foolish as to believe they could. That is how it was during the Depression. Cash simply accumulated in the banks; soon they had billions which they were able to lend but couldn't. The banking system had made worse the boom and made worse the crash. Now, when the Federal Reserve decided to act, nothing happened. Yet more remained to be learned about the management of money.

Irving Fisher, 1867-1947.

Irving Fisher

That such deficiency remained so late was not the fault of one of the two most interesting figures in the history of American economics. With Thorstein Veblen, whom we've already encountered, that was Irving Fisher. Both were students at Yale at nearly the same time in the last century.

Fisher, a neat, slender, handsome man with a patrician manner and a beautifully trimmed beard, was many things—a learned mathematician, a successful inventor, a disastrous speculator and a committed improver of the human race. He invented a simple card index system which he then manufactured himself and later sold at a handsome price to Remington Rand. His design for improving the race was by better nutrition and more thoughtful breeding—if

horses, cattle and wheat, why not people? Also to improve the race, or anyhow its behavior, he was ardently for prohibition, although here economics entered. He argued, no doubt correctly, that men were more productive when off the sauce. In the late nineteen-twenties Fisher went heavily into the stock market and in the Crash lost between eight and ten million dollars. This was a sizable sum, even for an economics professor. When you read that the Consumers' Price Index has gone up, it is Fisher you have partly to thank. He pioneered in the development of index numbers and also in mathematical economics. Though mathematical economics has not yet taught us everything about the economy, it has proved a valuable way of keeping economists occupied.

Fisher's greatest contribution was to our understanding of money. He showed in one simple formula what determines its value. No one, however averse to mathematics, should be put off by it:

$$P = \frac{MV + M^1V^1}{T}$$

P is prices. M is the quantity of ordinary money or cash in circulation. M^1 is also money, being that much larger part which consists of bank deposits. V and V^1 are the rate at which each of these two kinds is spent—their velocity of circulation. For centuries a relation had been recognized between prices and the supply of money. This was why prices rose with the issue of the Continental notes and the Greenbacks. Fisher's formula refined and made explicit this relationship. Prices go up as the amount of money, the M's, go up. But money is not merely hand-to-hand cash. Bank deposits subject to spending by check—M^1—must be added. And, if money is quickly spent, the effect will obviously be greater than if it lies buried in a mattress or is a purely sedentary deposit in a bank. So quantity in each case is multiplied by rate of turnover—the respective V's or velocity of circulation. A particular increase in money supply will have more effect on prices if it is concentrated on a few transactions than if it is spread over many. So you divide by the number of transactions (the T in the equation) to allow for the volume of trade. That is all.

As a description of what determines the value of money, Fisher's equation of exchange is still accepted. Like πr^2, it may well endure.

For Irving Fisher, however, the equation was not merely a description of how things work; he thought it highly operational. By increasing or decreasing the supply of money, you could, he concluded, increase or decrease prices. By reducing or increasing prices, you could suppress the euphoria, offset the depression and thus moderate the cycle of speculation and disaster that had so long been such a blight on economic life. (Fisher was not the first to be captured by this thought.) With his formula in hand, he moved ahead on the remedy. He formed an association to promote the regulation of the money supply and thus to stabilize prices.

In the nineteen-thirties, prices being depressingly low, the obvious step was to increase the supply of money. Prices would then recover, business and employment would be stimulated. In 1933, his idea was adopted, more or less, by Roosevelt. The gold content of the dollar was reduced; for the same gold there would be more dollars. It didn't work. The trial was not wholly fair, for the government kept most of the extra dollars. But Fisher's own formula showed why the effort failed. As money was created, people, frightened as they were in those Depression years, simply held on to it. Low velocity offset the increased quantity. More important, an increase in M, or hand-to-hand money, did not mean necessarily an increase in M^1, or bank deposits. These increased only as borrowers wanted to borrow, bankers wanted to lend. In the Depression, we have seen, neither borrowers nor bankers were willing. The supply of money could not be increased.

Fisher discovered what people, including numerous economists, have been exceedingly reluctant to believe. There are no cheap and easy inventions involving money alone that will solve all, or any, economic problems. Were it so, the inventions would already have been made; we would now all be saved from depression or inflation and be otherwise prosperous and happy.

But Irving Fisher's work was not wasted; it paved the way for a much more complex and imaginative step in economic policy. That was to have the government not only create money but also *ensure* its use—its velocity—by spending it. That was what Keynes now proposed. What is now called the Keynesian Revolution began with Irving Fisher. This Keynes himself affirmed. Writing to Fisher in 1944, he referred to him as one of his earliest teachers on these matters.

THE END

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RADIO ASTRONOMY

By Isaac Asimov

Radio Telescopes

THE ABILITY to receive microwave echoes with the precision and delicacy required by radar astronomy depended on the development of improved radio telescopes. Grote Reber's dish was the prototype of bigger ones to come. A dish some 75 meters (250 feet) across and built into a natural cavity in the landscape was used to send signals to the moon and to receive the echoes.

The largest yet was constructed over a natural valley near the town of Arecibo in Puerto Rico. There, in November 1963, a dish 305 meters (1000 feet) across was put into action. It had an area of 73,000 square meters (18.5 acres).

The Arecibo dish was made of a loosely woven wire-mesh surface and could detect microwaves with lengths down to 50 centimeters (20 inches). In late 1972, efforts were begun to improve it by resurfacing it with 38,774 aluminum panels that would make it possible to receive and reflect microwaves with lengths as small as 7 centimeters (2.8 inches).

As an indication of the forethought required in matters other than astronomy itself, each aluminum panel is perforated with small holes. This allows 44 percent of the sunlight to pass through and support the vegetation beneath. Without that, erosion of bare soil would eventually endanger the underpinnings of the dish.

The improvements were completed in November 1974.

The microwaves received by a dish are reflected toward a receiver placed at its focus and the delicacy and efficiency of the receiver has also advanced considerably since Grote Reber's original investigations.

In this respect, a turning point came with the development of a technique which Einstein had discussed, from theoretical considerations, as long before as 1917. Einstein pointed out that a particular molecule could absorb a photon of some characteristic energy size. It could release that energy if it

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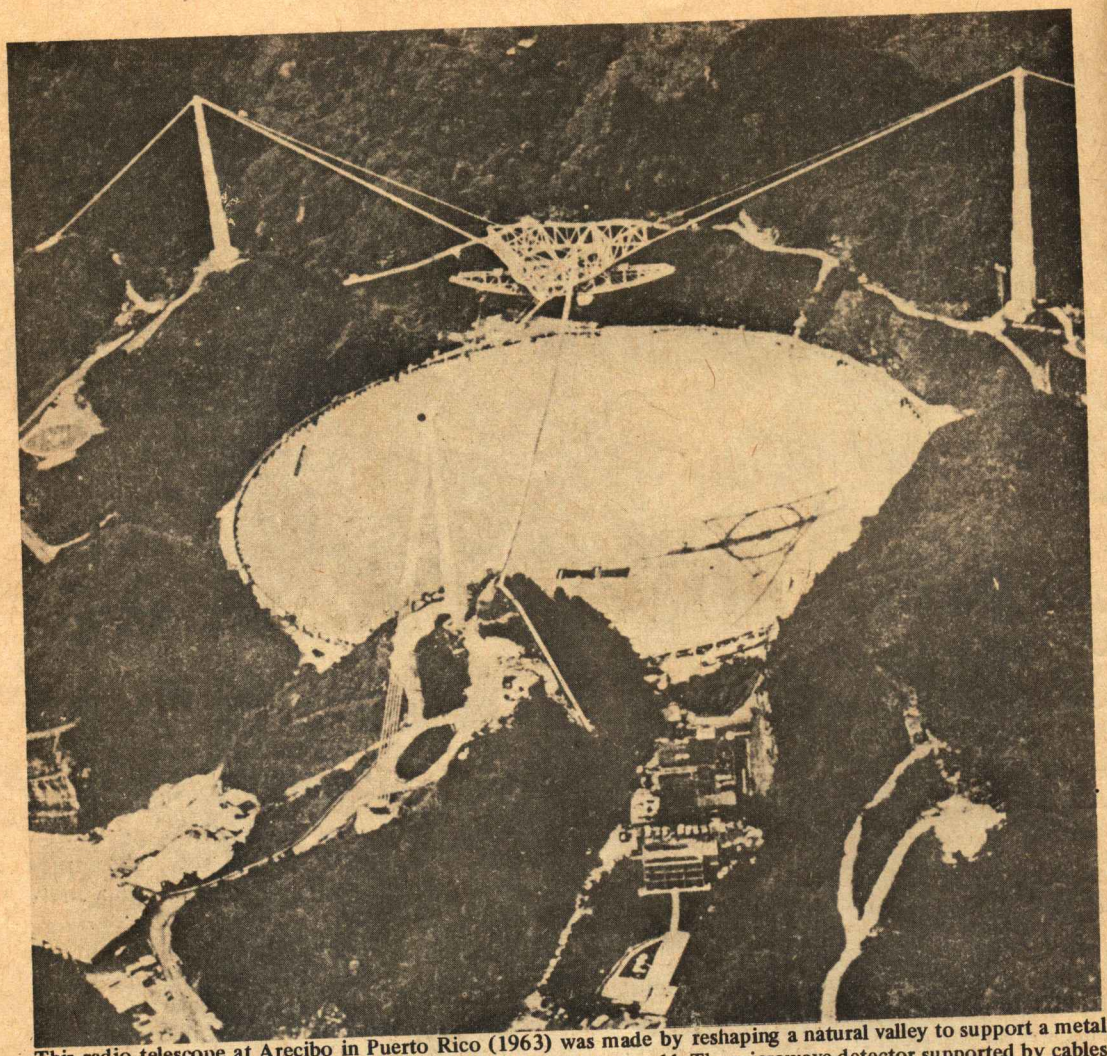


This radio telescope at Arecibo in Puerto Rico (1963) was made by reshaping a natural valley to support a metal mesh a thousand feet in diameter. It is the largest dish in the world. The microwave detector supported by cables from the three towers can be moved to provide limited ability to scan the sky in addition to that provided by the motion of the earth. *U.S. Air Force*

were struck by a photon of that same energy size. The molecule would release the energy as a photon and this, together with the striking photon, the two exactly equal in energy would move off in the same direction.

If there were a number of high-energy molecules, the two photons would eventually strike two other such molecules producing two more photons. All four could strike four molecules, producing four more photons and so on. In this way, a single photon moving into an energy-high substance could produce a whole flood of photons all of the same size and all moving in the same direction.

In 1953 the American physicist Charles Hard Townes put this into practice, using molecules of gaseous ammonia that had been raised to higher energies. These molecules happened to react to photons in the energy range of microwaves. A very weak beam of microwaves entering the ammonia would stimulate the emission of more microwaves of the same energy and there would thus emerge a greatly amplified beam.

Townes called the process "microwave amplification by stimulated emission of radiation," a term which was abbreviated to the initial letters. These were run together

and the device was called a "maser" in consequence.

This same system was soon found to work in solid systems as well as in ammonia. The Dutch-American physicist Nicolaas Bloembergen devised a solid maser which could be steadily pumped to a higher energy state by the use of an electric current or by light, even as it was being made to lose its energy through maser action. It was a "continuous maser."

Such a maser can be used to receive the feeble microwave beams focused upon it by one or more reflecting units of a radio telescope and then to emit them again with no change except amplification.

The combination of increased size and delicate reception made the radio telescope enormously more useful than might have been foreseen in the 1940s. Even the best radio telescope cannot "see" the sky as an optical telescope can, however.

Light photons are so energetic that they can be detected in small quantities in different parts of a receiver (whether an eye or a photographic plate) so that sizable areas can be recorded at once, with differences in light intensity making a general picture of the kind we are used to.

Microwave photons are much feebler, and a radio telescope must obtain the microwaves from a single region of the sky and convert this into a tiny electric current with a voltage that varies according to the intensity of the microwave beam. The receiver must scan a region of the sky point by point and the voltage must be plotted for the different points. In the end, a series of wavy lines is obtained, representing parts of the sky with similar intensities. You can have concentric closed curves working toward a center of maximum voltage.

It is as though you had to look at one point of the sky at a time, measuring the light intensity at that point, then at another point and another, and then plot the whole thing. It would take a much longer time than ordinary seeing but in the end you would get the same picture you would get in the usual fashion, provided nothing moved in the interval.

One disadvantage of a large dish is that it is quite likely to be immovable. The 305-meter (1000-foot) spherical receiver at Arecibo, for instance, is fixed in position and points straight upward. The receiver, however, is suspended on a cable far above the dish (at the center of the circular segment represented by the dish) and is designed in such a way as to correct for spherical aberration. It is movable and by appropriate change in position, it can receive waves that originate anywhere up to 20° from the zenith in any direction.

Since the Earth rotates, various portions of the sky come within range of the Arecibo dish, and in the end it can focus about some 40 percent of the sky and follow any particular radio source for a period of time. Anything that remains more than 20° north or south of zenith is beyond the reach of the dish at any time during the day or night.

There is a dish that is 91 meters (300 feet) across at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia, which is partly mobile in the same way that Reber's dish was. The Green Bank dish can move north and south but not east or west. This means that any spot in the sky could be picked up at some time during the twenty-four-hour day as it passed over the meridian, but it could then be studied for only a very short time.

Naturally, it would be convenient to have a dish that could be moved in any direction so that it was as versatile in this respect as an optical telescope. This particularly enticed the English astronomer Alfred Charles Bernard Lovell, who, in 1951, became the first professor of radio astronomy at Manchester University.

He supervised the building of a 76-meter (250-foot) paraboloid dish at Jodrell Bank Experimental Station, about fifteen miles south of Manchester. It was an epic effort in construction that took six years, with the turret rack of a battleship being used to move the receiver. The dish was finally completed in 1957. In 1971 it was renovated to achieve efficient reception in the 21-centimeter (8.3-inch) wavelength, which proved particularly important.

The Jodrell Bank dish was not surpassed till 1971, when a fully steerable dish, 100 meters (328) feet across, was constructed about fifty miles west of Bonn, Germany. The largest one in the southern hemisphere is a 64-meter (210-foot) steerable dish at Parkes, Australia.

Of course, not all radio telescopes need be dishes. They can be made up of antenna arrays and may be the descendants of Karl Jansky's original receiver rather than of Grote Reber's original dish. These arrays may be fixed or they may be mounted on rails for partial mobility. The individual antennas can be adjustable too.

One kind of array has two lines of antennas, crossing at right angles. A large array of this kind was first designed and used by an Australian radio astronomer, B. Mills, and it is therefore called a "Mills Cross."

The original Mills Cross contained 600 antenna elements arranged along two arms each 450 meters (1500 feet) long. The whole was mounted over a horizontal layer of chicken wire, which served to reflect microwaves and give the antenna a second chance at them.

The resolving power of a Mills Cross is equal to that of a dish equal in diameter to the length of an arm, and naturally the Mills Cross is far easier to construct and far cheaper than a dish of that size would be. However, the disadvantage is that the Mills Cross, lacking the concentrating effect of a dish, cannot detect weak microwave emissions that the dish would pick up easily. Then, too, a Mills Cross array can't track a source and it can only work at the particular wavelength for which it was designed.

The largest Mills Cross now in use is at Molonglo, Australia, and has arms 1600 meters (1 mile) long. Each antenna is a cylindrical parabolic reflector that can be turned north and south.

The largest antenna array of any kind now in use is at Chuguyev, near the Ukrainian city of Kharkov. Its main arm is over 3000 meters (nearly 2 miles) long and it covers an area of 15,000 square meters (37 acres), just twice that of the Arecibo dish.

Even the largest radio telescopes, whether dishes or antenna arrays, are not very good at resolution if they are regarded as single structures in themselves. They can't be, considering the size of the wavelengths they deal with. Even the largest instruments dealing with the shortest wavelengths cannot resolve two sources that are less than 1 minute of arc apart. This is not much better than the eye can do using visible light.

It is possible, however, to use two different radio telescopes (the two not necessarily being of the same type) as radio interferometers. Each of the two, separated by a considerable distance, can be connected electronically and can take measurements of the same radio source. The two measurements come at slightly different angles, and by working with the interference of the two separate sets of wavelengths, a resolution can be obtained which would be equal to that of a single radio telescope stretching across the entire distance separating the two components.

Astronomers had to be prepared to separate the component radio telescopes by a considerable distance. When Michelson had used the interferometer principle to measure the diameter of the stars by light waves, he used two mirrors separated by 6 meters (20 feet). When dealing with the much longer microwaves, however, separations must be correspondingly greater.

In 1964 twin dishes were put into use at the Owens Valley Radio Observatory of the California Institute of Technology. Each is 27 meters (90 feet) in diameter and they are mounted on heavy rails so that they can be moved to varying distances from each other, with the maximum separation some 50 meters (1600 feet).

Interferometry is now being used among many radio telescopes. In western New Mexico, an array of twenty-seven dishes, each 26 meters (85 feet) in diameter, is being arranged in the shape of a Y across an area 42 kilometers (26 miles) in diameter. All will be electronically linked and movable on railroad tracks so that distances and arrangements can be modified. This telescope should be in full operation in 1981 and it is hoped that it will yield resolutions in the microwave range as good as that of the Hale telescope in the optical range.

But that, too, isn't the limit. Separate radio telescopes need not be directly connected electrically. Two telescopes can take independent tape recordings of a particular source at a particular time and the two can then be compared, with the effect of interferometry. That means that the base line separating two telescopes can be any length that the size of the Earth makes possible.

"Long base-line interferometry" was

first used by Australian and British radio astronomers. Using radio telescopes 100 kilometers (60 miles) apart, resolutions of better that 1 second of arc could be obtained, and radio telescopes began to outdo optical telescopes as far as resolution is concerned.

Longer base lines still were used. The two dishes at Owens Valley can be combined with another pair at Green Bank and a base line of 3200 kilometers (2000 miles) will exist. Nowadays, radio telescopes are used in cooperation across oceans as well as continents and the whole planet is now, in effect, a single telescope.

Using microwaves with a length of 3.5 centimeters, a resolution as small as 0.0003 seconds of arc has been obtained; something that far exceeds anything the best optical telescope could do.

It is astonishing that the same type of observation that seemed basically and hopelessly fuzzy in Grote Reber's time should, a mere thirty years later, become the sharpest method for observing the universe (within its range of wavelengths, to be sure).

Radio Sources

RADIO TELESCOPES CAN, of course, do more, far more, than merely detect microwave beams produced by man and reflected by the planets. The planets can be sources of microwave radiation of their own.

Every object which is at a temperature above absolute zero (- 273.1°C.) – and that means *every* object–radiates photons of all kinds. The average energy of the photons emitted increases with temperature and the wavelength of peak radiation decreases.

We are most aware of this in the case of any body hot enough to deliver appreciable quantities of photons in the visible-light wavelengths. Objects not hot enough to glow visibly can still radiate quantities of infrared radiation as our own bodies do or if too cool even to produce much of that will nevertheless radiate microwaves and longer radio waves. In fact, from the distribution of such purely "thermal radiation," the temperature of nonglowing bodies can be determined.

The American physicist Robert Henry Dicke first detected thermal radiation in the microwave region from the moon in 1946, and in the years that followed thermal radiation was detected from other planets.

One surprise came in connection with Venus. On May 2, 1956, astronomers at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C., detected microwave radiation from Venus and found, to their surprise, that its nature corresponded to temperatures far above the boiling point of water.

This was considerably higher than would have been expected if Venus were an airless ball at its distance from the sun. It has a thick atmosphere, however, and it had already been speculated that if this atmosphere happened to be heavy in carbon dioxide and water vapor, this would act as a heat trap. It would allow the high-energy visible-light photons to penetrate the atmosphere and reach Venus's surface but would not allow the lower-energy infrared photons from Venus's surface to penetrate back into space. In this way, heat would be retained by the atmosphere and the temperature would climb just as it does in a greenhouse where the glass allows sunlight in but not infrared radiation out. Venus would thus be the victim of a runaway "greenhouse effect."

Not all radiation is simply the result of temperature effects. In early 1955, two American astronomers, Kenneth Linn Franklin and Bernard F. Burke, using a Mills Cross, discovered a particular pattern of microwaves, whose source they could not determine. Jupiter happened to be in that part of the sky, and it was suggested as the source. Franklin, skeptical, plotted the position of Jupiter during the time the microwaves had been recorded and found that Jupiter's changing position coincided exactly with the path of the radiation.

The radiation from Jupiter could not possibly have a thermal origin, since the planet would have to be at enormous temperatures to release such a flood of radiation at the necessary wavelength. From almost the beginning, it was suspected that Jupiter had an ionosphere, as the Earth had, and charged particles moving through Jupiter's

magnetic field could produce such radiation.

The most intriguing aspect of radio astronomy involved the stretches of the universe beyond the solar system. That had come, in fact, at the very beginning, for Jansky had detected radiation from the galactic center, and Reber had plotted the intensity of radiation from various parts of the sky to make his radio map and detected various peaks of emission in the Milky Way.

In 1944 and 1945 Hey, using more powerful equipment than had been available to Reber, undertook to map the radio sky again and found one spot in the constellation Cygnus that was a strong source of microwave radiation. Eventually this was called "Cygnus A."

There was nothing visible in the area optically that might be Cygnus A, but Hey felt certain that some particular object, very small in apparent area, was responsible, and that it was not just generalized radiation from a large patch of the Milky Way. His reason for this was that the microwave source fluctuated, as though it were "twinkling." This would be expected in the behavior of a very thin beam of microwaves passing through the ionosphere but not of a diffuse beam.

Over the next decade and a half, a major effort on the part of the radio astronomers was to improve the resolution of their instruments so that the radio sources could be pinpointed to smaller and smaller regions of the sky and, therefore, be more easily associated with some object that was visible optically.

In 1948 the Australian astronomers John G. Bolton and G. J. Stanley set up a radio interferometer that zeroed in on Cygnus A and boxed it into an area of the sky not more than 8 minutes of arc in diameter (about a quarter the apparent width of the moon). They felt justified in calling the source a "radio star" and for a while that term was used rather indiscriminately for objects of this sort. It turned out to be a misnomer, and the more neutral "radio source" is preferable.

Similar interferometers, set up in Cambridge, England, in 1950, by Martin Ryle and others, quickly located fifty radio sources in the northern hemisphere while Australian astronomers located an equal number in the southern hemisphere.

The first identification of a radio source with an optically visible object was of something in the constellation Taurus. There the radio source "Taurus A" was found to be the Crab nebula, an irregular patch of expanding gas that is all that remains easily visible of a supernova that blazed in Earth's sky in 1054.

The number of radio sources expanded rapidly and before the end of the 1950s, the Cambridge group had produced a third listing of radio sources (3C) containing 450 items. In another decade, the radio sources could be numbered by the thousands and the original calm assumption that long-wave radiation was a minor phenomenon lay in ruins. If we exclude the sun itself, there is more energy reaching us from the universe in the form of infrared and microwave radiation than of visible light.

The radio sources are distributed rather evenly over the entire sky. This meant they could not be concentrated in our galaxy, for then most of them would be found in the Milky Way. The search was on, therefore, for extragalactic radio sources. Taurus A was a failure in this respect, for the Crab nebula is not only in the Galaxy, but in our own section of it. What about Cygnus A, however?

In 1951 the British astronomer F. G. Smith, using a radio interferometer of high resolving power, had boxed Cygnus A into a square 1 minute of arc on the side, and the problem was to find something in that tiny area that could conceivably be a powerful source of microwave radiation.

Here we have the interplay of radio telescopes and optical telescopes. The radio telescope pins down the source and the optical telescope translates that source into something visible to the eye. Baade, making use of the Hale reflector, probed the square within which Cygnus A was located and detected an oddly shaped galaxy there.

It seemed, in fact, to be two galaxies passing through one another. If that were so, it could be argued that turbulence produced in the gas and dust of each would produce enormous quantities of microwave emission. Cygnus A, therefore, turned out to be a "radio galaxy," emitting microwaves with an intensity at least a million

times that of the average galaxy.

The search was on for "peculiar galaxies," any galaxy that looked distorted or had some oddness to it. Any of these located within an area labeled as a radio source might prove to be a radio galaxy. By 1961 about 100 radio sources were pinned down to specific galaxies.

Actually, there were too many radio galaxies, and these were too energetic for easy explanation. It seemed highly unlikely that there were so many cases of colliding galaxies, or, if there were, that so much energy was produced by mere turbulence.

Eventually, ratio interferometers were designed and built that had such fine resolution as to pinpoint radio sources *within* the galaxies in question. They were found to be in the dust-free centers, or in two spots symmetrically placed on either side of the center. It began to seem that what was happening was somewhere in the center of the galaxies and that it was something explosive that could force the actual source to either side.

In 1961 the American astronomer Clarence Roger Lynds was trying to pin down the radio source 3C231 (the two-hundred-thirty-first listed in the third Cambridge catalogue). Within the area marked out by the radio telescope were a group of galaxies in which M81 was the most prominent, and which had been supposed to be the source. Lynds, however, as he sharpened the radio view, zeroed in, not on M81, but on a smaller neighboring galaxy, M82.

The American astronomer Allan Rex Sandage promptly subjected M82 to careful photographing through the Hale reflector and that galaxy was clearly and visibly undergoing a vast explosion. A three-hour exposure, using a special red filter that let through chiefly the light associated with hot hydrogen, revealed jets of hydrogen up to 1000 light-years long, bursting out of the galactic nucleus. (Careful studies of "Sagittarius A," a radio source at the center of our own galaxy, indicates there may have been a catastrophic explosion there, too, at some time in the past.)

Through radio telescopy, then, astronomical catastrophes on a new and hitherto unprecedented scale came into the human vision. What's more, the microwave emissions associated with these galactic explosions were so immense that they could be detected at distances beyond that from which even the Hale reflector could expect to receive optical signals. Indeed, the relatively primitive radio telescopes of the early 1950s could have detected Cygnus A if it were fifteen times as far away as it is. It was clear, then, that the radio telescope would enlarge our knowledge of the universe both in the type of phenomena that could be detected and in terms of sheer distance.

According to Hubble's analysis of the recession of the galaxies, it turns out that any object about 12.5 billion light-years from us would be receding from us at the speed of light. From such an object no energy could reach us as the Doppler effect would reduce all radiation to infinite wavelength. A distance of 12.5 billion light-years would therefore represent the limit of the observable universe.

The Hale reflector could just barely detect the light of galaxies that were somewhere between 1 and 2 billion light-years away, but radio telescopes could, almost from the beginning, do better than that. This implied the possibility of helping to determine some very basic questions about the universe.

In the 1940s astronomical opinion had come to accept the notion of a big bang origin of the universe, a term originated by the Russian-American astronomer George Gamow (1904-1968). This supposed that the universe, a number of billions of years ago, had its matter compressed into a relatively small object which exploded and that the receding galaxies and the expanding universe were a consequence of that explosion.

By the big bang theory, the universe was quite different long ago from the way it is now and the galaxies were spaced much more closely together and were all younger than they are now.

In 1948, however, the English astronomer Fred Hoyle and two Austrian-born colleagues, Hermann Bondi and Thomas Gold, suggested an alternative explanation. The expansion was an eternal phenomenon and new matter formed continuously and very slowly, though still in sufficient quantity to form new galaxies, as the old ones moved apart. The net result of

this "continuous creation" theory would be that, on the whole, the galaxies would always be the same distance apart and there would always be young galaxies as well as old ones. Therefore, the universe would be the same in its overall appearance at all times.

There seemed a chance that radio telescopes might offer a way of choosing between these two theories. It takes time for light to travel. A galaxy a hundred million light-years away is seen as it was a hundred million years ago; one that is a billion light-years away is seen as it was a billion light-years ago. One need only study very distant galaxies and see if they are closer together than they are now, as the big bang theory would predict, or no closer together at any time, as the continuous-creation theory would predict.

The very distant galaxies that can be seen in the Hale reflector are still not sufficiently far away to make the difference in average separation large enough to measure clearly—but what about the distant radio sources? If they are farther away than even the most distant optically visible galaxies, they must also date farther back in time.

In the mid-1950s Ryle analyzed the manner in which the number of radio sources increased as they grew fainter. They should increase more rapidly with distance according to the big-bang theory than according to the continuous-creation theory. It seemed to Ryle that the manner of their increase did indeed jibe more with big bang than with continuous-creation, but the data was very borderline and those supporting continuous-creation were not convinced.

Something more was needed.

Quasars

FOR THE MOST PART, radio sources were associated with everything but ordinary stars, despite the fact that they were originally called radio stars.

The first ordinary star known to send us microwaves was the sun itself. The quantity of microwaves received from it, however, was so small that if the sun were at stellar distances its microwave radiation would be undetectable. It would follow that radio astronomers might not expect to detect microwaves from ordinary stars.

But not all stars are ordinary.

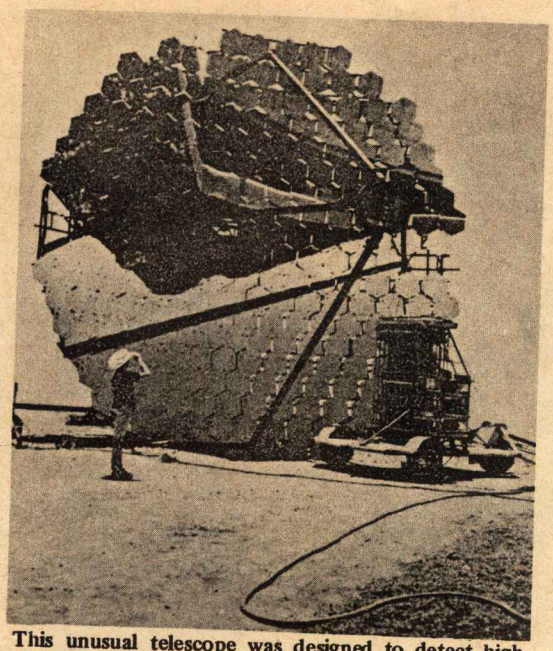
In 1958 Lovell's group at Cambridge picked up microwave emission from a faint red dwarf, UV Ceti, which was only 8.6 light-years away and whose peculiarity had been discovered no more than ten years before by the Dutch-American astronomer Willem Jacob Luyten. This star, the first other than the sun to prove a radio source, apparently produces flares no larger than those of the sun but much larger proportionately to its own shrunken body, and it is these flares that produce the bursts of microwaves. Other such "flare stars" have since been discovered but all are fairly close to us. Farther away, such red dwarfs would not be discernible to either optical or radio instruments.

Might there be extraordinary stars that would produce enough microwave energy to be detectable over fairly large distances? Some of the radio sources had been pinned down to very small areas within which there were no galaxies to be seen. Unless the source was a galaxy too far off to be detected optically, the source might be a star.

In 1960 Sandage, using the Hale reflector, studied the region within which radio source 3C48 had been pinpointed. Within that region, nothing at all was to be seen except a single 16th-magnitude star that had never been thought of as anything but a perfectly ordinary star of the Milky Way galaxy.

Now that attention was concentrated on it, however, it seemed to be not entirely ordinary. There was a tiny wisp of nebulosity associated with it. Was the small nebular wisp a sign of some unusual behavior or property that accounted for its large microwave emission?

Another small radio source was 3C273 and the Australian astronomer Cyril Hazard noted that it was so located that the moon could sometimes pass before it. The moon had been used previously to help in making precise locations, and Hazard proposed to use it again. In 1962 he trained a 64-meter (210-foot) radio telescope on the spot just before the moon passed by and noted the



This unusual telescope was designed to detect high-energy gamma rays from deep space by collecting the light emitted as the radiation enters the earth's atmosphere. It is at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory on Mount Hopkins in Arizona. The peak of the mountain can be seen inverted in the 44-foot-diameter mosaic mirror. *Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory*

exact position of the lunar edge when the microwaves were cut off.

He found that 3C273 was actually a double source, the two being separated by 19 seconds of arc and each source being 10 seconds of arc in diameter. The only object that seemed to be located in the right place was a 13th-magnitude star which, like 3C48, seemed to have a small nebulosity associated with it. Indeed, the second radio source was in the nebulosity.

Two other stars associated with radio sources, 3C196 and 3C286, were also located at about this time. All four objects were stars in appearance but all had strange properties. They were each rich in ultraviolet radiation, and each had a peculiar spectrum containing unidentified lines.

In 1964 a physicist at Princeton, Hong-Yee Chiu, suggested it was unsafe to call the objects stars. He felt they should be called "quasi-stellar sources." This means no more than "star-resembling sources" and that seemed to be as far as one should go. The phrase "quasi-stellar" was quickly shortened to "quasar."

The spectra of the quasars remained the prime puzzle, for the lines possessed patterns that had never been seen in any other object. In 1963 it occurred to the Dutch-American astronomer Maarten Schmidt that four of the lines in the spectrum of 3C273, the brightest of the quasars, resembled what might be expected of hydrogen, except that hydrogen lines never had that distribution in that part of the spectrum.

Could the lines have been shifted from a part of the spectrum in which the pattern would indeed occur commonly? If so, they would have had to be shifted so far that it would mean that 3C273 was receding from us at the velocity of over 40,000 kilometers (25,000 miles) per second. That seemed unbelievable, but if it were true, other lines fell into place and could be accounted for.

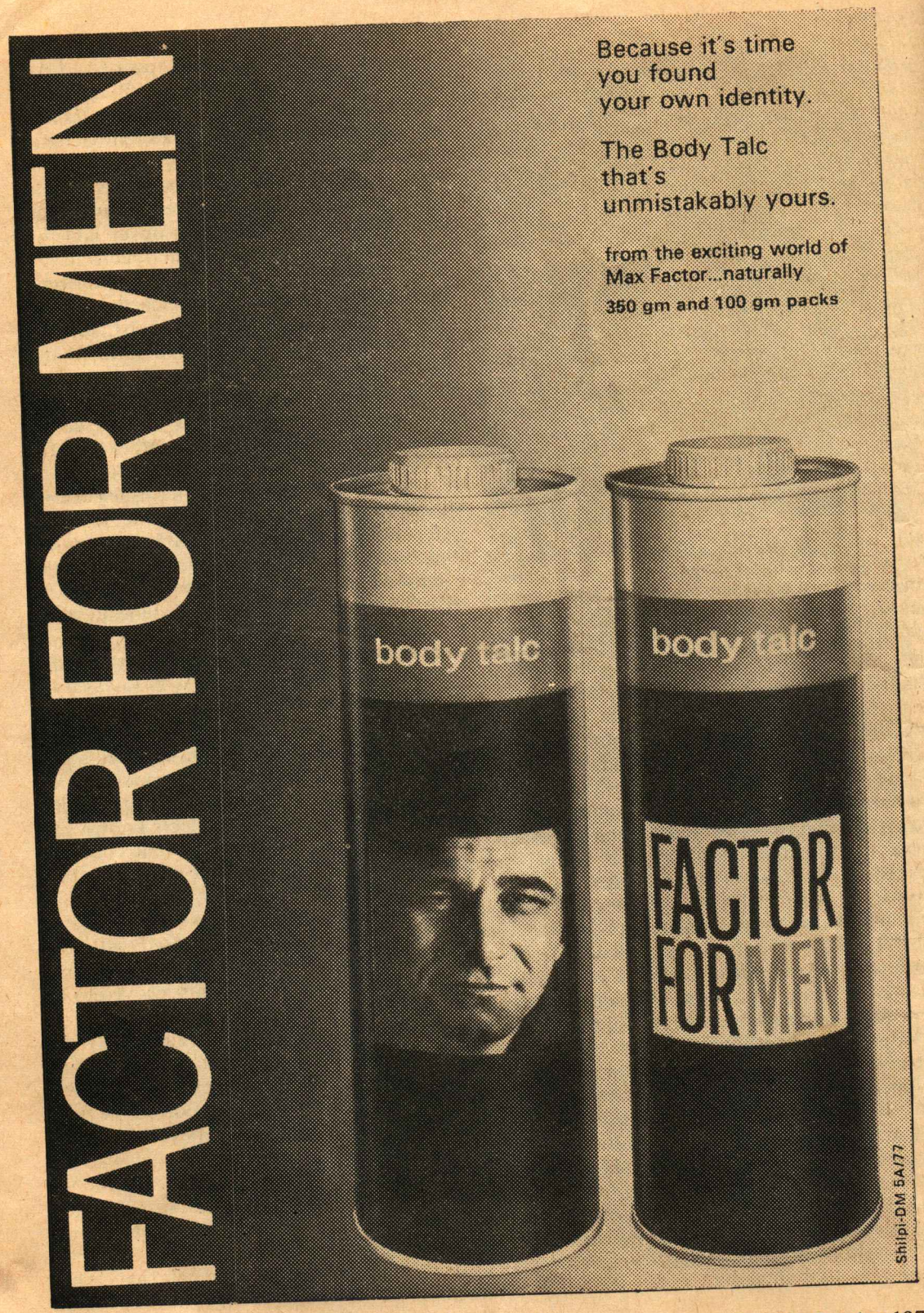
Schmidt, together with the American astronomer Jesse Leonard Greenstein, turned to other quasar spectra and found that, in each case, sense could be made out of the lines if a huge red-shift were supposed.

Such enormous red-shifts meant that, according to Hubble's picture of an expanding universe, the quasars were very distant from us. Even the closest, 3C273, was over a billion light-years away, and the others were much farther.

The quasars, if their enormous red-shifts are accepted as indicating enormous speed of recession and consequently great distance, were the farthest objects known and perhaps the farthest objects that could be known. Other quasars have been found by the dozens, new records for distance being established now and then.

In 1971 a quasar was detected and given the designation 0H471. In 1973 its spectrum was recorded and its red-shift proved to be so great that its distance was placed at 12 billion light-years. This is very nearly the limit of observation, for it had to be receding from us at nearly the speed of light. Newspaper headlines therefore reported the finding in terms of "Astronomers see the end of the universe."

But what must the quasars be in order to be visible at such huge distances? They must be at least a hundred times as luminous as galaxies such as our own and yet they must be much smaller than galaxies. What can pack so much energy into so small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Back in 1943 Carl K. Seyfert, while still a graduate student in astronomy, detected a peculiar galaxy, which has since been recognized as one of a group now called "Seyfert galaxies." They may possibly make up 1 percent of all known galaxies though actually only a dozen examples are known.

In most respects, Seyfert galaxies are normal and have only moderate red-shifts. The nuclei, however are very compact, very bright, and seem unusually hot and active—rather quasarlike, in fact. Perhaps quasars are very large Seyfert galaxies that are located so far from us that only the bright centers (and bits of nebulosity in the nearest) can be seen. What can be the source of all that compact energy, either in the Seyfert centers or in the quasars? That is a question that still goes unanswered.

When the quasars were first found to have enormous red-shifts, it was argued that this completed the argument Ryle had advanced in connection with radio sources increasing in density with distance. It was held that the distant reaches of the universe were markedly different from our own neighborhood, that the universe was different when it was younger, and that the big bang theory of creation was correct and not the continuous-creation theory.

Not all astronomers, however, agree that the red-shifts of the quasars imply that they are at great distances. Other explanations of the red-shifts have been advanced—that the quasars are objects that have exploded out of galaxies comparatively near to us or that they are objects so massive that they have produced a gravitational red-shift. Even if they *are* at great distances, it can be argued that their distribution is fairly even after all and can be made to fit the theory that the universe has not changed with time.

In 1964 the American physicist Robert Henry Dicke pointed out that radio telescopes, reaching out so many billions of light-years, were also reaching out billions of years into the past—so many billions of years that they might actually detect the big bang taking place.

We would then be seeing the big bang at such a distance and consequently the source would be receding from us so rapidly that the energetic photons liberated would not be seen in their true light. There would be a gigantic red-shift that would move them into the microwave region. Moreover, since we would see the big bang if we looked far out into space (meaning far into the past) in any direction, the microwaves ought to be coming from all parts of the sky indiscriminately, as a feeble background radiation.

The search for the background radiation began at once, and in 1965 A. A. Penzias and R. W. Wilson of Bell Telephone Laboratories, using a delicate "radiometer" designed by Dicke in 1945, reported that after all microwave emission was accounted for, there was still a faint general background of radiation, of exactly the type to be expected of the big bang. (As it turned out, this radiation had been detected before but had not been recognized for what it was. It even accounts for some of the "snow" on television screens.)

The presence of the background radiation is the strongest evidence yet in favor of the big bang theory, and is considered by many to be conclusive. It means that radio telescopy has reached out not only to the end of the universe, in space, but to the beginning of the universe, in time, as well.

Dust Clouds and Pulsars

IF RADIO TELESCOPY can tell us surprising things about the most distant reaches of the universe in space and time, it can tell us equally surprising things about matters close by.

Optically, we see the bright stars that make up our own galaxy, but there is other matter as well. There are not only planets that may be circling other stars as they do our own, but there are also vast clouds of dust and gas that spread between the stars. Some of these clouds are visible as glowing nebulae, lit by the stars they enclose. Some are visible as dark clouds obscuring the stars behind them.

Some of the elements of the thin dust and gas between the stars can be identified by their absorption of specific wavelengths of starlight. As long ago as 1904 the German

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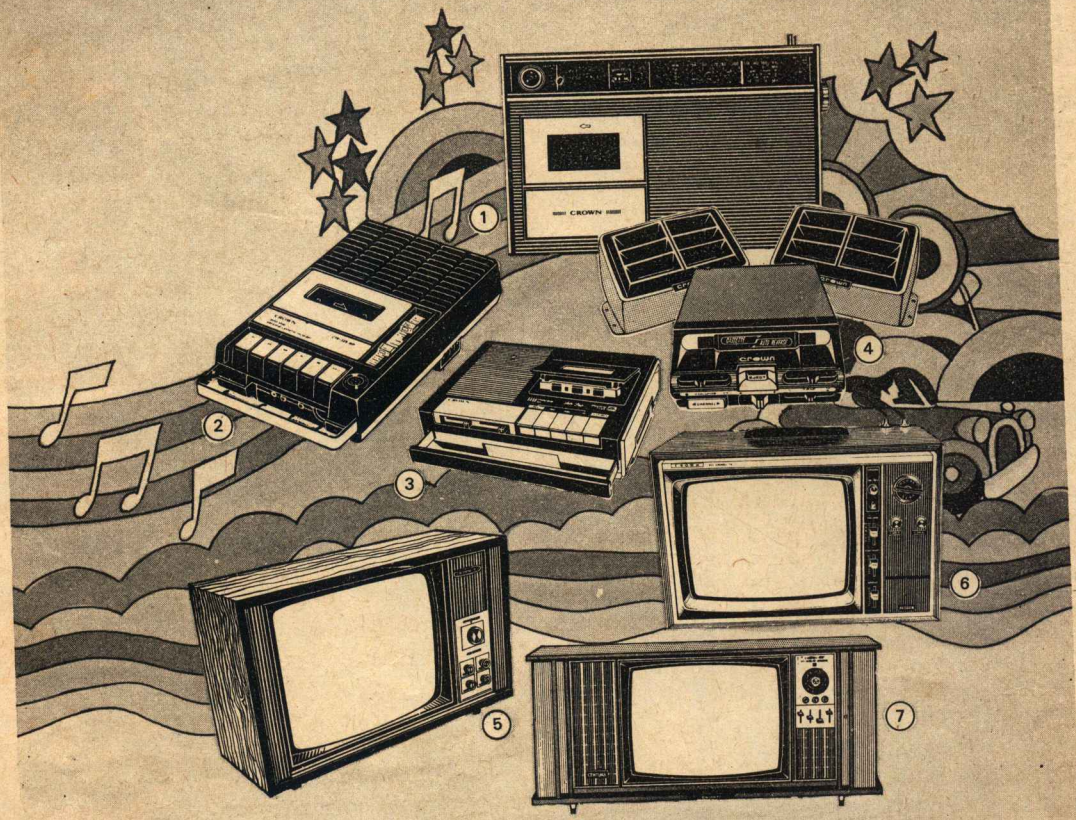

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astronomer Johannes Franz Hartmann (1865-1936) had detected the absorption line of calcium in starlight passing through the clouds.

Not very much, however, can be done in this fashion and astronomers soon reached an apparent limit.

This is not surprising. Since the 1930s they have been convinced that most of the material in the interstellar clouds, as much as 95 percent even, is cold hydrogen. Such hydrogen does not emit, obscure, or absorb visible light and it might as well not be there as far as optical telescopes and spectroscopes are concerned.

But what about microwaves?

In 1944 a Dutch astronomer, Hendrik Christoffel van de Hulst, was hiding from the German armies that had occupied his land during World War II. He lacked an observatory or instruments and was forced to confine his work to pen-and-paper theoretical calculations.

He considered the behavior of the single proton and the single electron that made up the cold hydrogen atom. Their magnetic fields might line up in the same way or in opposite ways, and there is a slight energy difference between the two line-ups. Hydrogen atoms might occasionally absorb energy and move into the higher-energy line-up and then later emit that energy again.

The energy produced would be very small and would be represented by a microwave photon with a length of 21 centimeters (8.3 inches). The emission for any given hydrogen atom would take place only very rarely—once in 11 million years—but considering the vast quantity of hydrogen atoms present in outer space, there should be a continuous drizzle of this 21-centimeter (8.3-inch) microwave beam.

Once the war was over, this wavelength was searched for, and in 1951 two men working independently, the Swiss-American Felix Bloch and the American Edward Mills Purcell, located it. Clouds of cold hydrogen could now be followed, here and there, in the skies above us, and the concentrations of hydrogen in our galaxy could be mapped.

From these maps, it was clear that the hydrogen formed a series of spirals about the nucleus of our galaxy. Since it seemed certain that the hydrogen was associated with starry concentrations, this represented conclusive observational proof that our own Milky Way galaxy was indeed a spiral galaxy, with our own solar system in one of the spiral arms. This had been taken for granted earlier, to be sure, and the tracing of lines of hot hydrogen clouds and of very bright stars which tend to form in dusty areas had, by 1951, made a spiral structure seem probable, but it was the microwave studies that produced the final bit of evidence.

Hydrogen is not the only cold substance that can be detected by radio astronomy in the vast distances between the stars. Every different atom or atom combination radiates or absorbs different wavelengths in the microwave region producing a virtual "fingerprint" by which each can be recognized conclusively. In a few cases, an optical "fingerprint" can be produced. In 1937, for instance, spectra obtained with the Hooker telescope had revealed the presence of carbon-hydrogen (CH) and carbon-nitrogen (CN) combinations in the interstellar gas clouds.

On the whole, though, astronomers did not expect to find much in the clouds. The atoms, they felt, were spread so widely apart that the kind of collisions required to produce atom combinations would be too rare to produce them in detectable quantity, except where carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen were concerned. These were the only atoms capable of making combinations that were present in reasonable quantity, in among the overwhelming presence of hydrogen.

The presence of CH and CN was understandable, therefore, and the presence of the microwave absorption lines confirmed in 1963 what the optical astronomers had found a quarter century earlier. An oxygen-hydrogen combination (OH, "hydroxyl") ought also to exist, perhaps, though it had not been found optically. It would radiate or absorb microwaves in four characteristic wavelengths and in 1963 two of these wavelengths were located by radio astronomers at M.I.T.

There seemed not much hope that one could go beyond that. The chances of the kind of collisions that could produce combinations of more than two atoms seemed impossibly small, yet in 1968 observers at the

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University of California, including Townes, the inventor of the maser, located microwave emissions from interstellar space that were characteristic of molecules of water and of ammonia. The water molecule is a three-atom combination (H_2O) and the ammonia molecule is a four-atom combination (NH_3). Thus was born the study of "astrochemistry."

In 1969 a four-atom combination, involving the carbon atom, was discovered. This was formaldehyde (H_2CO). Molecules made up of five, six, and seven atoms (all including carbon) were then discovered and by the early 1970s over two dozen different molecular combinations had been detected.

How these may have been formed is still a puzzle but one thing seems clear. The compounds found in outer space seem to be those which are en route to the carbon-containing chemicals characteristic of life. Chemists on Earth have speculated on how the life chemicals might have arisen from simpler substances and have wondered how much they might trust their conclusions, considering that they could never go back in time to check. Now they see that even in the utterly hostile environment of outer space, carbon-containing compounds begin to form. Thus, radio astronomy comes to the aid of biological speculations on earth.

The presence of fairly complicated molecules in interstellar dust clouds was odd enough, but there was odder still for radio astronomers to discover.

Some radio sources twinkle as a result of the influence of the Earth's ionosphere on the microwave beam. It was as the result of such twinkling that Bolton felt Cygnus A to be a small source by which the concept of the radio star had originated.

Attempts were made to study such scintillations and to study variations in microwave emissions from quasars. In the process of doing so, there came some indication, in 1964, that there might be a more rapid fluctuation of some radio sources, a fluctuation that could not be blamed on the ionosphere. It occurred at moderately long wavelengths that till then were being neglected by radio astronomers, and it occurred too rapidly for the instruments then available to study in detail.

The English astronomer Anthony Hewish devised a large array of 2048 antennas spread out over an area of 18,000 square meters (4.5 acres). It was designed to be able to detect rapid fluctuation at wavelengths in the meter range.

In July 1967 the new radio telescope was set to scanning the heavens and, within a month, a young graduate student, Jocelyn Bell, reported receiving bursts of microwaves from a place midway between the stars Vega and Altair—very rapid bursts, too. Hewish had expected rapid fluctuations but not that rapid. Each burst of microwaves lasted only one twentieth of a second and they came at intervals of one and one-third seconds. Indeed, they came with remarkable regularity. They came every 1.33730109 seconds.

Hewish felt that what was being observed was a kind of "pulsating star" and this became shortened to "pulsar." He located three others before he announced his discovery in February 1968. Since then additional pulsars have been found by the dozens. Two thirds of them are found along the narrow band of the Milky Way, an indication that, unlike quasars, they are part of our own galaxy.

All the pulsars are very regular in their behavior, but the period varies from pulsar to pulsar. One has a period as long as 3.7 seconds. On November 18, 1968, astronomers at Arecibo detected a pulsar in the Crab nebula, which had a period of only 0.033089 second. It was delivering microwave bursts thirty times a second and is the shortest-period pulsar known.

Naturally, the question arose as to what could produce such short flashes with such fantastic regularity. It had to be some massive body (to account for all the energy) which was engaging in some very regular periodic motion. It had to be revolving about another body, or rotating about its axis, or pulsing in and out in a period of anywhere from a few hundredths of a second to a few seconds.

No object known to astronomers could move with such a short period. Even white dwarfs, the smallest stars known, could not rotate, revolve, or pulsate rapidly enough.

Could there be something smaller than a white dwarf but just as massive? If we could imagine all the subatomic particles of the

smashed atoms that make up a white dwarf, collapsing closer and closer together, the star would get smaller and smaller and its gravitational field would become more and more intense. Eventually the gravitational field, acting upon its own substance, would become so strong that electrons would be pulled into protons, forming neutrons. The entire star would become a mass of neutrons in contact.

As long before as 1934, the existence of such "neutron stars" had been suggested by Baade and by the Swiss astronomer Fritz Zwicky (1898-1974). The properties were later worked out in some detail by the American physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967).

If the sun were to collapse to form a neutron star, its entire mass would be concentrated into a tiny ball perhaps no more than 15 kilometers (9 miles) across. Thomas Gold suggested that a pulsar might be a rotating neutron star, small enough to rotate in four seconds or less. Electrons would be held so tightly by the neutron star's enormous gravity that they would escape only at the magnetic poles, producing microwaves as they did so.

The neutron star would therefore be something like a hose that was spraying microwaves in a sweep as it turned. Each time it turned past us, we'd receive a pulse of microwaves, very briefly.

Gold suggested that if this were so, then the neutron star had to be losing energy and, therefore, slowing its period of rotation. Of those known, the Crab nebula pulsar is the shortest-period and, by this line of reasoning, the youngest. If it was formed at the time of the great supernova of 1054, as seems almost certain, it is a little over 900 years old. When its pulses were studied closely, it was found to be slowing up as Gold had predicted. The period increased by 36.48 billionths of a second each day. Similar slow-ups were noted for other pulsars as well.

Could such neutron stars be observed optically? Should not the electrons emerging from the neutron star produce bursts of visible light as well as microwaves? Keen attention was focused on the Crab nebula, and in January 1969 it was noted that the light of a dim star within the nebula *did* flash on and off in precise time with the microwave pulses. This was the first optical pulsar discovered, the first visible neutron star.

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ALL THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEN

By Janardan Thakur

Preface

"WHY do you want to write about small people?" Romesh Thapar, the distinguished Editor of *Seminar*, asked me when I had just set out to gather material for the book. I had liked that. There were better men one could write about; even the story of a man toiling in the fields would perhaps be more worthwhile or, at any rate, pleasanter to write.

None of the characters who occupy these pages has done anything great and virtuous to deserve the flood of books written on them. And yet there is a good reason to write about them, particularly because they are "small people." For, these were the men—and women—who came to preside over the destinies of this great country, the people who almost succeeded in destroying all the values that they swore by. And we, the people of India, let them do it. We too, are the guilty ones. If we are to save ourselves from going under again, we must realize our own guilt, we must know the faces that committed the ugly assault on the human spirit.

George Fernandes was absolutely right when he said, recently, that we had "got off the hook very cheap." Most of us paid almost no price for regaining our liberties. Most of us still do not know what we owe to the few who suffered and died so that we remain free.

Though the nightmare is over, the dark forces still linger. It is not only that the people who did it to us are still very much there; it need not be them again. Unless we learn our lessons from the past, it could be other faces who may do the same, or worse. It is time, perhaps, to know who is who. It is certainly time to know the real enemy. One need not wait for the final judgments; that is merely being legalistic. Often, the people's instinctive judgments are more right than the verdict of courts.

After the traumatic elections of March 1977, I had been toying with the idea of doing something very different—a small book on the "victims," among whom were the nameless ones who had suffered and died for us. That, I thought, was the least I could do to expiate my own sins. It was a debt I owed to myself. That was the project I had been discussing with a close friend when I suddenly saw a new glimmer in his eyes. "I have another idea for you," he said. "Why don't you first write on all the Prime Minister's men?" He was gushing with infectious enthusiasm. He had even named the title!

I had no idea, then, of what I was up against; no idea of the number of doors that would be slammed in my face, the number of people who would bang their telephones before I could explain myself. I had not realized how much fear was still abroad among the people. "I have nothing to say," came the voice of one of the principals of the morbid drama, before the line snapped. I thought he was being arrogant or nasty, but as I soon found he was only jittery.

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They all seemed frightened, but none was repentant!

Surprisingly, it was the lesser characters who were more willing to talk. But they didn't have much truth to tell. And interviews with the principals in such cases hardly ever give more than their side of the story, unless of course you know how to grill them. Even so, they give you some insight into themselves.

Much of the material in this book is based on interviews, many of them taped, with people who have had a ringside view of the powerful ones for a long time. All incidents, scenes, or quotations are based on the testimony of eyewitnesses and dependable sources, or my own personal observations. Some of the facts in the book may seem startling, or at times even shocking, but they have been included after careful scrutiny and much cross-checking. In fact, my notebooks from a month and a half of hectic probing are spilling over with incidents and quotations which I did not use because they are either too lurid or vulgar or difficult to substantiate in a court of law. One can prove the physical assaults at the hands of a tyrant, but how does one prove the mental agonies and tortures that one may have undergone?

This is not a book on the Emergency; the roots of the recent nightmare go back deep into the past and I have tried to understand some of the principal characters in relation to their past. This is not a book that would give you an account of what happened during the Emergency; only some of the actions and events which help to show the real faces of the characters have been included in the narrative. If at times the tone is harsh or blunt, the reader must remember that the writer is only echoing the tone of the people, more often in milder terms.

JANARDAN THAKUR

The Backdrop: Nehru to Sanjay

IT WAS the evening of 26 May 1964. Jawaharlal Nehru had just returned to Delhi from a three-day holiday in his favourite Doon Valley, accompanied by his chatelaine and protector, Indira Gandhi. There had been a stream of solicitous visitors at Teen Murti House that evening. After they had left, the father and daughter sat down for dinner, Nehru's last. He had looked relaxed and cheerful. They had talked of various things. He was about to retire for the day when he picked up a morning newspaper and his eyes caught a small front-page item. "Teenagers on the Rampage: Car Thefts in the Capital," said the headlines.[1] He had gone through the report, which was veiled but not lacking in innuendoes. It said there had been a marked increase in the number of such cases but the police had not been able to lay their hands on this "fun and liquor loving" gang with connections in high places.

Putting the paper down, Nehru had remarked: "I hope none of your brats is involved in it."[2]

He had said it casually, more in good humour, but Indira Gandhi had gone ashen. Haltingly, she had told him a story she had kept to herself for several days. Deeply disturbed, the old man hobbled to his bedroom and, according to an household functionary, Nehru had kept pacing up and down his room for quite a while. His last night must have been a restless one. Early next morning he was very ill. Somewhere deep inside him, his aorta had burst and at 2 P.M. he was declared dead. It was the end of an era.

The report that had pained Nehru in his last feeble hours related, primarily, to a murky incident ten days earlier. A little after the midnight

[1] *Times of India*, New Delhi, 26 May 1964.

[2] A retired functionary of Teen Murti House in an interview with the author.

of 16 May, a bunch of "high-spirited" young men drove in a brand new Fiat to a petrol pump in Motibagh, a residential area of New Delhi, ordered 20 litres of petrol and sped off, leaving the lone petrol pump attendant shouting after them for money. Shortly afterwards the car crashed against a traffic island and the three drunken occupants, one of them an American, were marched off by a cop to the Motibagh police station.

As it transpired later, the Fiat had been stolen an hour earlier from outside the Nizamuddin East house of Dharam Yash Dev, the India representative of the Jayanti Shipping Corporation and a former High Commissioner in Mauritius. On their way, the hoodlums stole a motorcycle from Golf Links, a posh residential colony. One of the boys jumped on to the two-wheeler and roared off; he ended up a little later with a serious head injury on a patch of road under construction on way to Palam airport. Some people returning from Palam identified him as Adil Shahryar, son of Mohammad Yunus, then a Joint Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry. Adil, a bosom pal of Sanjay Gandhi, the second son of Indira Gandhi, was rushed in an unconscious state to the Safdarjang Hospital and later to Sen's Nursing Home.

Interrogated at the police station, one of the three boys gave his address as Teen Murti House. The police officer thought he was trying to act funny and gave him a rap on the back. "Now tell me where you live, scoundrel!" he barked. The boy still gave the same address. The bewildered officer rang up the Superintendent of Police who came rushing to the police station. After a little talk with the boys, the SP telephoned Teen Murti House. A functionary took the phone. Nehru was away in Bombay, attending the AICC session, and Indira Gandhi had gone with him. They were not expected back until next morning. However, within minutes, a very anxious member of the Prime Minister's house turned up and got the boys released. Nothing was left on record, so that when Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and other MPs raised the issue later in the two houses of Parliament, the then Home Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda, suffered no qualms in replying that the case had been declared by his police force as "untraced." The Sadachari Home Minister was not to be spared, though, by some journals in the country which continued to snipe at him for trying to hush up the case of the "VIP Baby."

Early morning on 17 May, Dharam Yash Dev had found the car missing and had reported the theft to the police. The Fiat belonged to his younger brother, a Major in the Army, who had come on a visit. Within a couple of hours the Motibagh police station rang up to say that the missing car had been traced and could somebody come and identify it. Major Yashpal rushed off to the police station. Just a few minutes later, a cream-coloured Mercedes stopped at the gate and a very flustered looking man got down. He was making anxious inquiries about the house of Major Yashpal. Dharam Yash Dev came forward. He knew the man very well. He was Mohammad Yunus. What was the matter? Why was he so troubled? Yunus told him his son had got involved in a motorcycle accident the previous night and he wanted to find out if the Major had lost a motorcycle. It was all very puzzling. What had been stolen from the house was a car and not a motorcycle and yet Yunus was looking for the owner of a motorcycle. How on earth had he come to Dev's house of all places? Yunus must have realzied he had made a faux pas; he immediately left, saying that his son was in a very serious condition and he could not lose time.

A little Perry Masoning made things somewhat clearer. Major Yashpal's driving licence, his Automobile Association membership card, and a few other personal belongings were missing from the smashed car's glove compartment. These papers could have been the only possible clues to have brought Yunus to the East Nizamuddin house. Could Adil Shahryar have pocketed these papers before changing over to the motorcycle in Golf Links? Dev, a relentless pursuer, was determined to know the truth, the whole truth, but a friendly police officer had whispered the warning: "Sir, now that you have got the car back you should consider yourself lucky. Some big, very big people's sons are involved in it."

Several months later, on 10 October 1964, Dharam Yash Dev got a telephone call from an unexpected quarter. On the line was Yashpal Kapoor who was already on way to becoming the principal factotum of Indira Gandhi. Kapoor told Dev that Indira Gandhi wanted to see him. Dev was somewhat puzzled. Not that he had not met her before, but he could not quite figure out this call from the blue. Anyway, he said he

would go and meet her the next day.

"No, no, you must come and meet her today," said Kapoor very excitedly. "Indiraji is going away to Europe tonight. *Bahot zaruri milna chahti hain*" (she wants to meet you very urgently).

And so at 5 o'clock that afternoon, Dev went to No. 1, Safdarjang Road, the house to which Indira Gandhi had moved after Nehru's death. She had become the Information and Broadcasting Minister in Lal Bahadur Shastri's government.

She was effusive in her welcome. She told him how fond of him "Papu" (her way of addressing her father) had been, she showed him a page from Nehru's diary where he had mentioned him, she brought out from the shelves one of the books of Dev which the AICC had published in 1944. Evidently, she had kept herself prepared for the meeting; she had even kept the page from Nehru's diary marked from before. It was all very nice, but surely it was not just for this that she had to meet him so urgently. Nearly an hour passed but she had not come to the point, she just kept going round and round the mulberry bush, as it were.

Finally, Dev asked her why she had sent for him.

"Er. . . well, Dharam Yashji, you know some people are linking up my son's name with the car theft incident. You know very well my son could never do a thing like that. Besides, my son was not even here that night. He was in Kashmir on a holiday."

Sanjay Gandhi had an alibi. Years later, when he was poised to become the heir apparent to Indira's throne, he told the editor of a New Delhi journal that he was in Kashmir at the time of the car theft. About the same time, Yunus, always a great drum-beater of Sanjay Gandhi, wrote an article in a Bombay weekly in which he gave the details of the alibi. "Sanjay and a friend went to Kashmir on a hitch-hiking trip, with only fifteen rupees between the two of them. A friend gave them a lift up to Chandigarh, from where they went in trucks, buses or other vehicles going in that direction and took three days to reach the beautiful valley. Again they decided not to stay in one place and kept moving from one abode to another. Unfortunately, this exciting holiday came to a sudden end because of Jawaharlalji's death on 27 May 1964."

Sanjay Gandhi had indeed gone to Kashmir, but allegedly not the way Yunus described it. That romantic hitch-hike was all a concocted story. Sanjay and his friend, many people say, had been packed off to Srinagar by an early morning flight on 17 May and they had turned up later that evening at the house of a Muslim lady teacher who was to be their host at Srinagar. They had taken care to arrive at the lady's house looking like real hitch-hikers, with mud splattered all over their trousers and shoes. "Oh aunty," they had announced, "we've been hitch-hiking from Delhi for the last three days!"

The entire episode, though murky in the extreme, was perhaps nothing very extraordinary for a pampered high society boy. A famous doting grandfather, parents whose marriage was almost a total wreck, a whole retinue of fawning servants and craven courtiers, a pack of rumbustious friends, an environment of Western permissiveness, with all this a boy could hardly be expected to grow up into anything but a Sanjay Gandhi—arrogant, brash, and cruel. And yet his elder brother, Rajiv Gandhi, who had grown up in the same milieu, was in many ways very different—modest, sober and gentle.

Mohammad Yunus, an "Afghan adventurer" who had come to be a retainer of the Nehru family, effusively describes the "childish pranks" of Sanjay and Adil. "One of my earliest memories of his (Sanjay's) innocent pranks was when he was only four years old. Both he and my son got into a tub full of water and poured a big packet of Lux flakes into it. They thought they were being very clever to splash the flakes gleefully, without realizing what the outcome would be. The more they splashed, the higher rose the foam till they were completely submerged and all one could hear was their yelling from inside the white mountain."

Truly innocent! But quite early in his life, recalls a contemporary of Sanjay Gandhi at the Doon School, the young prince had shown streaks of crudeness and cruelty. One of his popular sports in those days was to kick dogs around. It must have given him great pleasure. "Sanjay was also very reckless," recalls Shahryar. "He was always driving into ditches. Once he had a jeep which he drove through ploughed fields and over rocky hillsides."

One morning in 1971, some young people of Delhi arranged a picnic. Sanjay Gandhi, one of the participants, turned up in a brand new jeep

with a couple of charming girls. Sanjay saw a beautiful green tree and boasted that he could knock it down with his jeep. The girls said he could not. Sanjay accepted the challenge. The bet was five rupees. He started banging the jeep against the tree. After two hours of persistent knocks the tree fell but by then the jeep had been badly damaged. He had won the bet. This tree-banger was later to turn into a famous tree-planter!

Wild obstinacy was an essential trait of Sanjay's character. His indiscipline and rowdyism reached such proportions that the Doon School felt obliged to turn him out. The boy who was later to become his mother's biggest liability was clearly a big problem for her even then. But he was also his mother's pet. She had something very special for him all along. She would go out of her way to defend him. She would even lie for him. When he would fail in class and Feroze Gandhi would chastise him, his mother would come forward and say, "Oh no, he hasn't failed. I know there must be a mistake. I will talk to his teacher. . . ."[3] All that this rough child seemed to care for was scrap. He pottered around with nuts and bolts, wrench and hammer. "Some day this boy would make a car of his own," said the hangers-on of his grandfather's court. That pleased and flattered the arrogant little master. He soon believed it. "One day I will make a car of my own," he started boasting.

"But of course, Sanjay, you will make your own car," intoned that smoothest of operators, Jayanti Dharam Teja, on one of his visits to Teen Murti House. He was one of the regular courtiers there. With him always came his gorgeous wife, Ranjit Kaur, whom he had married after the mysterious death of his first wife, a rich American Jewess, in a Rome hotel. Tall and big, Dharam Teja talked big and lived big. Thanks to Nehru's patronage, he had turned almost overnight into a shipping tycoon. He had started a company with an initial capital of Rs.200 and wangled a loan of Rs.20 crores from the Government of India. *"Kutch thora sa to de do"* (give him a little something) was all that the gracious Nehru had told his minister. Dharam Teja had suddenly rocketed into fame. He had offices in New York, London, Paris, Rome, and many other cities of the world. He maintained luxury apartments in London, Tokyo, and on the French Riviera, all of them overflowing with the goodies of life. Amongst his "chums" in Delhi, Dharam Teja could count people like V. K. Krishna Menon, T. N. Kaul, and Nehru's cousin, R. K. Nehru. There was also a retired Army General whom he later employed on a fantastic salary, nobody seems to know why.

Every now and then, Dharam Teja would ply his political chums with expensive gifts. One of his very dear friends, then India's Ambassador in Moscow, loved photography, and so whenever he went and stayed with him in Moscow, which was often, he never forgot to take with him some latest model of a film projector or a camera. For some he brought electronic gadgets, for some mechanical toys, and for yet others the most expensive mink coats.

Where big deals were concerned, no holds were barred for some of the businessmen. Scruple was a word which did not figure in their dictionary. Very late one night, around 2 A.M., one Indian tycoon made a long-distance call from London to his representative in New Delhi.

"Could you please accompany my wife to Madras by the morning flight?" he asked. "She has to go there on a very important mission."

"But the flight is only a few hours from now," said the bleary-eyed representative.

"Never mind, all arrangements have been made. Just go with her."

Next morning the representative accompanied the beautiful lady to Madras. The tycoon was negotiating a big loan from a feudal banker in Madras but the deal had run into some trouble. And so the hurried visit of his wife down South. Awaiting them at the Madras airport was the banker's secretary and a chauffeur-driven limousine. They were driven to the Raja Saheb's massive palace and promptly ushered into the ornate drawing room. A little later materialized the master of the house, gems sparkling on his fingers. After some small talk and refreshments, the Raja Saheb excused himself and disappeared into his inner apartment. Some minutes later a liveried bearer came to the drawing room, bowed to the lady and said, "The lady of the house requests you to come inside." The lady picked up her bag and followed the bearer, leaving her elderly companion in the drawing room. It was not until late afternoon, with just a little time left for the plane back to Delhi, that she emerged from the *Zanana.*

[3] Girish Mathur in an interview with the author.

The tycoon's loan was through.

The beautiful lady was a tremendous asset for her husband. She was a great success, and not just with bankers and business magnates. She could turn on many an old politician.

That there is a dark truth about most public men is beyond doubt. Very rare indeed are the public men who do not lead dark, illicit, and subterranean lives. The split personality of politicians is an almost daily experience. One is always up against two sets of facts and opinions; the private facts and opinions of people in power and the public version of those facts and opinions which the great men–and women–feel called upon to maintain.

The easy access of Dharam Teja and others of his ilk to Teen Murti House remains a conundrum for many. But as the British journalist and writer, James Cameron, put it:

> The tragedy of the Nehrus has been on an almost classic pattern: they proclaimed and believed in the principles of social democracy and sustained and promoted their party through the nastiest aspects of unbridled and dishonest capitalism . . . . Congress has been sustained by corruption forever, by the black money from the business houses, who as *quid pro quo* have been tacitly allowed to run their own parallel economy for their personal enrichment, and the growing impoverishment of the people. *This was the case even in Pandit Nehru's day; it was no secret that this honest man in his final weariness was well aware of the sycophancy and corruption that surrounded him, and remained silent while it flourished because he was too vain to acknowledge it and too weak to fight it* (italics mine).

Nehru was an honest man. He was an intellectual with a heightened awareness of human problems. He was a man who loved intellectual dialogues with Shaw and Malraux and Marcuse and the whole array of brilliant minds. Nehru loved his country and his countrymen and, as he himself said, he got back their love in such great measure "that nothing I can do can repay even a small fraction of it." Nehru was honest and great, but he was no saint. He had his weaknesses. He liked, or at least bore with, fawning courtiers. Under his large umbrella thrived Dharam Tejas and Kairons and a host of shady characters.

His home was no hermit's retreat. The permissive Western traditions of Motilal Nehru's Anand Bhawan had been carried over to Teen Murti House, the massive, red sandstone building which had been the residence of British Commander-in-Chiefs. Unlike Anand Bhawan, liquor was not publicly served in Nehru's house, in deference to Congressmen's public vow. But certainly there was no puritanism about the house of Jawaharlal, whom Malraux had described as an "un-English English 'gentleman'."

Fun and frolic was not taboo. Holi at Teen Murti House was always a very pagan festival, with lots of men and women going wild on the occasion. Nehru liked pretty women. He liked being surrounded by beauty. In a letter to his sister from Ahmednagar jail, Nehru said: "It struck me as an odd and arresting fact that for nearly 26 months–for 785 days to be exact–I had not seen a woman even from a distance. . . . And I began to wonder–what are the women like? How do they look? How do they talk and sit and walk?"

Here is an incident as narrated by P.N. Sarin, who knew Teen Murti House closely:

> On a certain New Year's eve there was a party at his [Nehru's] house and 30 or 40 guests thronged the drawing room. Among them was the principal of a girls' college and a long-time friend of the Nehru family. This lady had a fondness for big, bright flowers and several always adorned her hair. That evening Nehru was clearly fascinated by them. After dinner the guests assembled in the library to play "Murder." The "murderer," chosen by drawing lots, was known only to himself. He was expected to "murder" someone and, when the lights went on, to submit alongwith the others to cross-questioning by a "detective." While the others were obliged by the rules of the game to answer all questions truthfully the "murderer" could lie as blatantly as he chose, the object being to mislead the "detective" and keep his own identity from being revealed.
>
> The lights were turned off, and after a moment or two of anticipation, a shrill scream pierced the darkness. When the lights

were switched on, the lady with the flowers in her hair was found "murdered" on the sofa, her flowers rakishly askew. Nehru, pleased with his effort, did not wait to be cross-questioned, but sheepishly confessed to the "murder", adding that he had not been able to resist dislodging the flowers in the lady's hair.

Here was just the house where the Tejas would be in their elements. They never missed a chance to please the Nehrus. And so, finding the wayward boy at a loose end, bent on doing nothing but tinkering with cars and two wheelers, the Tejas offered to take him with them to England and have him attached to the Rolls Royce factory.

"Don't you worry, Indiraji, we shall look after him," they assured the anxious mother.

And they did look after her "darling son" very well, providing him with "everything" that an impetuous young man could desire. The other brother, Rajiv, was already in England under their guardianship. Any time the boys got bored with living it up in England, the Tejas would tell them, "Go and have a holiday in Paris, my boys. Or go to the Riviera. It would be great fun at this time of the year." And so off they would go for a holiday on the Continent. Money was no problem. Any time they needed money, they had just to ask "Uncle Teja."

The time as Teja's "apprentice" must surely have been very educative for the boy. The man who had started off with Rs.200 and become a shipping tycoon fired Sanjay's ambitions. Why couldn't he become the Ford of India?

The Tejas had managed the Nehrus, but their charm did not work with that little man who succeeded Jawaharlal. One day, when Teja was summoned by Lal Bahadur Shastri, he had turned up with his wife. Shastri did not like it, and told Teja curtly, "The appointment was for you, not for your wife."

The dossier on Teja had grown thick, and Shastri had initiated action against him. Shastri died in January 1966, but it was difficult to stop law from taking its course. Indira Gandhi was still to become the empress of India, Sanjay was still to become the prince. In June 1966 Teja disappeared from a 5-star hotel in Delhi and when he was arrested a year later in New York he jumped a bail of 20,000 dollars and escaped to Costa Rica. But finally the government caught up with him. He was nabbed, put on trial, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

There was a lesson in that for Tejas-in-the-making, but such people do not learn lessons that easily.

Teen Murti House was an invaluable training ground for Indira Gandhi. But her long years there took their toll: the springs of her womanhood had run askew. She was 30 when she entered the house, 47 when she left it. The prime of life. Though many women, young and old, visited Teen Murti House, it was essentially a man's world, even something of a bachelors' "den." Nehru himself had been a widower since 1936 when Kamala died of tuberculosis in Lausanne. He had always kept with him in a little square basket a part of the ashes of his frail, beautiful wife. But attachment to the memory of a woman is not quite the same as attachment to a living woman. There was nothing of the restraints of Indian family life at Teen Murti. One of the closest friends of the house, V. K. Krishna Menon, who had remained a bachelor, often let off his inner steam playing with mechanical toys. Another permanent fixture in the house, right until 1959 when he was shown the door amidst a haze of scandal, was a small dark man, M. O. Mathai, who as Special Assistant to Nehru wielded an open influence on his master and an underhand but powerful influence on his master's daughter. His influence was to be gradually weakened and then displaced by the more elemental sway over her of that Rasputin-like Yoga teacher, Dhirendra Brahmachari. And always lurking in the background, always at beck and call was that tall, rough-hewn runaway, from the former North West Frontier Province, Mohammad Yunus who had wormed his way into the Nehru household. Come to think of it, Indira Gandhi had quite a menagerie around her even in those days!

But her own man she had lost quite early. "The only period of comparative domestic tranquillity she and Feroze ever enjoyed was 1944 to 1964, the interval between the birth of Rajiv, their first son, and Sanjay, their second."[4] In her choice of husband, Indira Gandhi's miscalculation had been as great as that of the Syndicate bosses later in choosing her to be the Prime Minister. She had thought Feroze was the type who would dance to her

[4] Welles Hangen, *After Nehru Who?*

tune. When she first knew him, in the early thirties at Allahabad, Feroze was a very earnest young man, a little short and thick-set but handsome in his own way. His biggest plus point, as far as Indira was concerned, was his complete devotion to her dear mother, Kamala Nehru. Krishna Hutheesing, Nehru's sister, has recorded[5] how because of Kamla Nehru, Feroze had given up his college education to join the movement, how he had followed her on her journeys to the villages carrying a little box with her tea or coffee and sandwiches. It was a Dante-Beatrice sort of relationship. When Kamala had gone to Europe for treatment, Feroze had managed to persuade a relative to send him abroad for education. He was at Kamala's bedside, with Nehru and Indira, when the end came.

In England there had been other young Indians who had courted her. Among them were Mohan Kumaramangalam, a powerful speaker and President of the Cambridge Union (later to be her Minister for Steel and Mines) and Rajni Patel, an active member of Krishna Menon's India League (who was later to become one of her principal fund-collectors). Indira Gandhi was a person riven with complexes. Her impression about young men who tried to court her[6] was that "they are not after me, they are after Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter." As one commentator who has probed deep into her personality pointed out,[7] Indira has always suffered from an anxiety-ridden, unavoidable complex with regard to her father. A constant fear of not measuring up to, not being worthy of, Nehru.

Much against her father's wishes, she decided to marry Feroze. Nehru had thought that the two would not be compatible, and eventually Indira acknowledged: "We were not compatible."[8] It had turned out that Feroze had nothing if not a mind of his own. He was not the type to be an appendage to a woman, or a *ghar jamai,* even if the in-law's house happened to be the prime minister's residence. As a very close lady friend of Feroze[9] said about him, "He was egotistical. Any lesser man would have enjoyed the role (of being connected with the Prime Minister) but he had a very deep-seated grouse against himself for being in that situation."

If Indira had miscalculated about him, Feroze too had been wrong about her. That shy chit of a girl was not quite the sort of person he had thought her to be. He once told a lady friend the kind of girl he would have liked to marry. "I would like, I think, to get married to an *amrud wali* in my next life." Asked why, he had replied, his eyes atwinkle, "Well, at least, she would be there to press my feet when I came home in the evenings."

The marriage failed, but the two never broke away in the formal sense. Which, in a way, worsened their situation. The two went their own different ways, carrying with them their mounting guilt complexes. One either burns within, or indulges, or sublimates one's basic urges. There was no sublimation. The upshot was dissipation.

Romantic by nature, Feroze was a quick and easy victim of Cupid's darts. While he was the General Manager of the *National Herald,* Lucknow, he is said to have fallen in love with the daughter of an eminent Muslim leader of the city. She was "strikingly beautiful" and the involvement grew so deep[10] that at one point Feroze even talked about marrying the girl. He was practically dragged to Delhi. Nehru called R. N. Goenka, proprietor of the *Indian Express,* and got Feroze the job of Advertisement Manager on a salary of Rs.2,500 per month.

For some time Feroze lived at Teen Murti House, but soon after being elected to the Lok Sabha in 1952, he was allotted a house of his own and he moved there. He would go to Teen Murti House for breakfast or lunch or dinner but always return to his own house on Queen Victoria Road to spend the night. During his years in Delhi he flitted from affair to affair. A lovable man, full of the spunk of life, he had a close circle of friends and advisers, quite an assortment of young politicians and journalists, ranging from idealists and serious professionals to political operators-in-the-making. Among the "Feroze boys" were Lalit Narayan Mishra who was later to set a record in scandals and Dev Kant Barooah, a pleasure-making man with intellectual pretensions who was to preside over the liquidation of the Congress empire. Lending charm and colour and poetry to Feroze's little court was Tarkeshwari Sinha, a captivating parliamentarian from Bihar.

Cause enough for the frequent flare-ups of

[5] *We Nehrus.*

[6] A lady friend of Mrs Gandhi in an interview with the author.

[7] Oriana Fallaci.

[8] Mrs Gandhi to Uma Vasudev in *Indira Gandhi.*

[9] Prema Mandi in an interview with Uma Vasudev.

[10] Told to the author by a close friend of Feroze.

the famous "Nehru temper," Indira Gandhi's anger against Tarkeshwari was not because she became a Morarji girl or because she never missed an opportunity to castigate her in Parliament and outside. The way she went out of her way to get Tarkeshwari defeated in 1971 elections was not a mere political revenge. It was a personal vendetta. As people rightly say, Indira Gandhi "never forgets."

But in those earlier days she could do little but stew with impotent rage, or take it out in dissipation. During the fifties, there were times when Nehru, a non-interfering man, got troubled over the goings on in the house.[11] Indira Gandhi would often return to the house late at night in "quite a state" and though Nehru knew about it he did not know what he could do. He was a man who respected other's privacy. Nehru once gave some advice to a woman functionary of the house which showed how well he understood his daughter.

"About Indu," he advised the person, "you must understand one thing—you'll get by—be available, but don't go near her. Don't intrude."[12]

But there were a few people who could "intrude" any time, and they were not women functionaries of the house. They could walk in and out of her personal rooms any time they liked.

It was during these days that a poor young refugee from Pakistan who had joined the Prime Minister's house as a steno-typist was slowly becoming a "confidence man" of Indira Gandhi. Yashpal Kapoor had been assigned to do some odd secretarial jobs for Indira who had become associated with a number of public organizations. He was a quiet, discreet man, always available, always willing to run and do an errand without his left hand knowing what his right hand did. Indira was perhaps not aware that Nehru too had assigned the young man with a rather delicate job. He was to keep his eyes peeled, be around wherever Indira Gandhi happened to be, but always at a safe, discreet distance. All he had to do was to ensure that she got back home without anybody getting the wiser about where she went, what she did. A faithful shadow, keeping at bay any scandal that might arise.

[11] A member of Nehru's personal secretariat in an interview to the author.

[12] Related by Vimla Sindhi to Uma Vasudev, Indira's biographer.

In a modest first floor flat tucked away amidst the criss-crossing lanes of Northern Extension Area in New Delhi lives a bitter old man who tells you in the first meeting that "nobody in the whole world knows more about Indira than me. We spent 13 years under the same roof." The man is dark, short, chubby, 68, and a bachelor. His eyebrows are clipped, his bald pate fringed by white hair, clipped short. His short snub nose gives him a bull-doggish, pugnacious look.

The "same roof" was of Teen Murti House. The man: M. O. Mathai, for long a favourite private secretary of Jawaharlal Nehru, whom he once sent to Lord Attlee, then the Prime Minister of England, specially to study the secretarial set-up at No. 10 Downing Street.

The book-lined room is full of mementos and bric-a-brac from years of glory. On a mantelpiece is a large picture of George Bernard Shaw flanked by Nehru and M. O. Mathai, much younger, slimmer and smarter then. On a bookcase a somewhat fading picture of Vijayalakshmi Pandit in her youthful days. From an almirah the old man brings out a carefully wrapped portrait of Nehru. "Very rare, by Steinberg!" One looks around for a picture of Indira Gandhi, but there is none in sight.

Mathai is not very communicative about many things, but sometimes when a sore point is touched, his little eyes peer out and the pent-up lava bursts. "Her prime ministership? What do I think of *her* prime ministership? In 1966, a minister had come to me to seek my advice about the leadership, I told him 'do what you like but if she (Indira) becomes Prime Minister she will ruin the country.' I didn't know how long it would take, and now you see she has ruined the country and has ruined herself in the process."

He is hardly able to contain his contempt. "She had no qualities to be the Prime Minister. I know very well, more than any other man in the world. No qualities whatever. Only illusions, as most women have."

One can see *one* reason why he has remained a bachelor; he has a rather poor opinion about women.

The old man is suddenly expansive when he talks about Nehru. His eyes twinkle. "Nehru was a great man . . . a laaarge-hearted man, very laaarge hearted."

How come Indira Gandhi had not imbibed the qualities of her great father? "Why? Why

didn't she? Why was the son of Mahatma Gandhi a wreck?"

The old man is even more contemptuous when he talks about Sanjay Gandhi. "A swollen-headed chap. Was thrown out of school . . . for rowdyism. No brains. Can't write even two sentences. Like mother, like son."

Amazing how proximity sometimes leads to utter comtempt.

Mathai was a trusted man of Nehru and was privy to many secrets of the household. How and why he fell from grace is a story he would not tell himself but his attitudes and reactions to some of the members of the household give him away. Scorn is writ large on his face when he talks about Yashpal Kapoor. "It was I who had given him to Indira for secretarial work and he wormed his way, ingratiated himself," Mathai says with withering disdain.

His face twists into a grotesque grimace when he is asked about Feroze Gandhi. He is about to blurt out something, then stops. "I'll not go into personal matters." But he bursts out at the name of Dhirendra Brahmachari. "That Brahmachari!" he exclaims sneeringly. "Don't I know that Brahmachari? Bakshi Gulam Mohammad (then the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir) had told me that this man had misbehaved with some women who had gone to him to learn yoga. Bakshi had thrown this man out of Kashmir. . . . Indira had first met this so-called Brahmachari at Pahalgaum when she had gone there holidaying with her children."

Soon after Indira Gandhi became Minister for Information and Broadcasting and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, a small group of young parliamentarians, some of them with a leftist, progressive image veered round her and formed what came to be known as the "Back-benchers' Club." It included I. K. Gujral, Asoka Mehta, Dinesh Singh, Chandra Shekhar, and Nandini Satpathy.

In a way, this was the first of a series of caucuses around Indira Gandhi, a series leading up to that monstrous last caucus which finished her. The first was different from the last one. There was a whole world of difference in the people who formed her first caucus and her last.

Inder Kumar Gujral, a gentleman to the finger-tips, was to be the first victim of Indira's last caucus. He had started as a communist student worker in Lahore, become a member of the CPI, but after partition he had moved first to Jullunder and then to New Delhi where he had become a building contractor. His painter brother, Satish Gujral, was part of Indira Gandhi's arty circle and Gujral who had joined the Congress had come close to her. Asoka Mehta, the bearded socialist theoretician, had come to the Congress via the Praja Socialist Party and was to become a close colleague of Indira Gandhi until the time of the great split when he thought "the woman would sell the country to Russia."[13] Nandini Satpathy was a former card-holding "comrade" and Indira Gandhi's confidante who was later to be entrusted with the *jagirdari* of Orissa. Chandra Shekhar was a progressive Congressman who hated the Tammany Hall types in the Congress. Only Dinesh Singh, neither socialist nor progressive, was a queer fish in the group. His father and grandfather, the Rajas of Kalakankar in Uttar Pradesh, had been the clients of Indira Gandhi's grand-father, and Nehru had picked up Dinesh Singh for deputy ministership in the External Affairs Ministry in 1962. Smart, Doon School-educated, younger than Indira Gandhi by eight years, Dinesh Singh was to remain in her "inner circle" for several years until he became too boastful about his sway on her and was cast aside like useless linen.

One of the undeclared objectives of this "Back-benchers' Club" was to embarrass Lal Bahadur Shastri on whom Nehru's mantle had willy-nilly fallen. The little man who had become Nehru's confidant during his last weary years had often played with Indira Gandhi when she was a lonely, insecure little girl in Anand Bhawan. But Indira Gandhi had never really liked him. She could never think of him as anything but an ordinary lieutenant of her father, a man with outdated ideas, in any case someone far below her.

Soon after she was chosen the Prime Minister, the New York-based writer, Ved Mehta, asked her what she thought of Shastri as the Prime Minister, and she said: "Basically, he just didn't have a modern mind. He was an orthodox Hindu and full of superstitions. You can't lead the country out of poverty with superstition."[14]

It is no secret that Indira Gandhi wanted to become the Prime Minister right after her father's death. And even Nehru, despite his democratic faith, had wanted it that way. In his failing years

[13] Quoted in Kuldip Nayar's *India: The Critical Years.*
[14] Ved Mehta, *Portrait of India.*

he had thought of Indira as his successor and confided his secrets and ploys only to her. When he returned to Delhi after his last visit to Dehra Dun, Umashankar Dixit, another "retainer" of the Nehrus, had gone to meet Nehru. One of the points Nehru mentioned to Dixit that evening was about his daughter. "Indu can take decisions. Help her, help her."[15] Kamaraj, the king-maker, is said to have confided to political colleagues and journalists close to him that Nehru had told him: "After me, Indira."

Nehru, when confronted with the question by R. K. Karanjia, Editor of *Blitz*, said, "I am certainly not grooming her for anything of the sort. That does not mean she should not be called to occupy any position of responsibility after me."[16]

Ved Mehta asked Indira Gandhi if press reports were true when they said that Nehru wanted her to succeed him as Prime Minister and that she could easily have done so. Her reply to the question was not in the negative. While an elegant gentleman-artist, Feliks Topoloski, who was her "house guest," drew crayon sketches of her from all angles, Indira Gandhi told Mehta: "I was numbed by my father's death, and at the time I didn't want to think about holding any office. But I thought if I helped Shastri to become Prime Minister, then, when he got the office, he would consult with me, and in that way I would still have some influence on the future of our country.... I did many things for Shastri but once he got established as Prime Minister he didn't consult me on any of the major issues."

One of the issues on which the "Back-benchers' Club" had planned to pillory Shastri and, if possible, oust him, was the Tashkent Agreement. Kamaraj, the then Congress President, had fallen out with Shastri within hours of his becoming the Prime Minister in 1964. Kamaraj felt slighted over being bypassed in ministry-making, and whereas he had talked of the emergence of a "collective leadership" in the country, Shastri had made plain that he had been elected leader and he intended to be the leader.

And so Shastri's return from Tashkent had been chosen as a good point to mount an attack on him. But instead of Shastri it was his body that returned to India.

With Shastri suddenly out of the way, she climbed to the prime ministership on the back of another caucus, the old Syndicate bosses who had thought, mistakenly, that she was a *gungi gudiya* (a dumb doll). She had nothing if not a mind of her own, a very imperious mind, full of illusions of grandeur. By all accounts her intellectual calibre was of a low order. Her schooling had been slip-shod and perfunctory and she had failed thrice in tests for entrance to Oxford University. But soon after becoming the Prime Minister she began to show her immense capacity for manipulating men and events. She was a shrewd intriguer. "A crafty woman without depth" was how Krishna Menon often described her.[17] Her deep sense of insecurity, right from her days of childhood, had warped her mind. She could never look at anything straight, never meet a person and not suspect that he had some ulterior motive. She herself was a great one at intrigues, at playing one against the other. She was great too at using people and then kicking them out the moment they became inconvenient to her or showed the slightest signs of having a mind of their own. Never able to trust anybody for long, she kept changing her set of advisers, until in the end she found the sort of people who suited her temperament and style best—a set of fawning wheeler-dealers.

For about a year after she became the Prime Minister her close circle of advisers continued to be by and large the same people who had been in the "Back-benchers' Club"—Gujral, Nandini Satpathy, Asoka Mehta, Chandra Shekhar, Dinesh Singh. Also in the charmed circle, which came to be known as the "kitchen cabinet," was Romesh Thapar, an eminent left-wing journalist who belonged to Delhi's cultured elite. At one time he was interested in the production of documentary films, which first brought him close to Indira Gandhi when she was the Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

The kitchen cabinet was some sort of a combination of a secretariat and brains-trust of Indira Gandhi, who certainly needed brains to cover up her own inadequacy. But of these people around her, the one on whom she leaned most was Dinesh Singh whose own intellectual calibre was nothing to write home about. He was an obedient odd-job man and for a time at least he seemed to have the complete trust of Indira Gandhi. Whether her problem was to strike a deal with C. B. Gupta in Uttar Pradesh or to

[15] H. D. Malaviya, MP, in an interview with the author.
[16] *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 14-20 November 1976.
[17] Nikhil Chakravartty in an interview with the author.

instigate a revolt against Mohanlal Sukhadia in Rajasthan, it was Raja Dinesh Singh she chose for the job. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Umashankar Dixit, and D. P. Mishra, the shrewd political manipulator from Madhya Pradesh, were also close to her politically but it was Dinesh Singh who had her eyes and ears. At one point she even got his special advisory role formalized through a presidential notification.

For a time, L. K. Jha, a top ICS officer, continued to be her Principal Secretary. She had respect for his ability, but she had a point against him: he had been too closely associated with Shastri as his Principal Secretary. Soon after the general elections of 1967, in which half a dozen states slipped out of the Congress fold, L. K. Jha was kicked upstairs. He was sent off as Governor of the Reserve Bank.

In his place came P. N. Haksar, and with his arrival changed the scenario of Indira's court. It marked the start of the ascendancy of the Prime Minister's Secretariat as also of the new image that the lady was to acquire during the next few years. Her "years of glory" not only coincided with the "Haksar years" but were a direct result of Haksar's management of the country's affairs.

Though a Kashmiri Brahmin, Haksar went to Kashmir for the first time in 1960. He grew up at Allahabad, went to London School of Economics, and later the Inner Temple. In London, he was very active in student politics, was a member of the London Majlis, and was known to have Marxist views. He returned to India during the Second World War, and was attached for some years to the Communist Party. He settled down at Allahabad and began practising law under Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. In 1948 Nehru picked him for the first delegation going to the United Nations on the Kashmir issue. He had gone as a junior legal adviser to the delegation and had made a good impression at the UN. On coming back to India, he wanted to return to the Bar, but Jawaharlal asked him: "Is the Bar more ethical than serving this government?"[18] That was the beginning of his long and distinguished career in the Indian Foreign Service. He was Deputy High Commissioner in London when he was called back to be Indira Gandhi's Principal Secretary.

He in fact soon became the virtual Prime Minister of India for the next few years—the years which saw the rise of Indira Gandhi and her virtual deification as Goddess Durga. It was during this time that the great myths about her "hurricane tactics" and sound instinct and sure judgment and all the rest of it got built up. Haksar and the professionals whose services he requisitioned provided Indira Gandhi with a prop against which she continued to grow taller and taller. Haksar was no courtier of hers, but he was unquestionably loyal to her and worked assiduously to make her position strong and unassailable. Slowly but steadily he concentrated in the Prime Minister's Secretariat the power over all the economic ministries and then gradually brought under himself the political aspects of the Prime Minister's functions as well. The whole strategy of the split was planned and directed from Haksar's office. Even the correspondence and political statements and speeches of Indira Gandhi emanated from Haksar. So did her so-called "stray thoughts" which she sent to the crucial AICC session at Bangalore. They were really Haksar's "stray thoughts" which he had put together hurriedly. It was during this time, again, that the intelligence agencies of the government were used to the fullest in advancing Indira Gandhi's political prospects. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), headed by Kau, another Kashmiri Brahmin, was being fast transformed into a personal spy agency of Indira Gandhi.

These were the years when one of the principal tasks before Indira Gandhi was to bring down the opposition governments in many of the states. It was really Haksar who laid down the policy and the strategy. The Prime Minister's Secretariat had become a strong weapon to increase her hold on the party, a function that was none of its business.

To put the record straight, then, it was under Haksar that the unabashed use of government power and machinery began for all sorts of political purposes. The only difference was that while the operations under Haksar had some finesse about them so that they did not darken the image of Indira Gandhi, the post-Haksar operations became so crude and brazen that they tarred her face black. The concentration of power that Haksar had brought about was later to be used with devilish abandon by grovelling sycophants.

Even as Indira Gandhi was climbing from

[18] *Ibid.*

power to power and glory to glory, the worms were at work. They were fast corroding the very ground she stood on. Around her had grown a powerful group of personal favourites, sycophants, and political wheeler-dealers. The principal figures among them were Yashpal Kapoor who had for long had a close rapport with Indira Gandhi, and L. N. Mishra, an ambitious politician who believed he could attain the heights of power through sycophancy and money, with a little bit of divine blessing thrown in. One of his many astrologers who were more important to him than all the wisdom of the ages had told him that if he survived long enough he could even become the Prime Minister. But he soon lost his life in a most gruesome manner.

Like the lady he served, L. N. Mishra could never get over his deep sense of insecurity. Like her, his restless quest for sacred shrines and holy men could perhaps be explained by his private guilt. Like her, he always wore round his neck a garland of holy *rudraksha.* His beads were set in gold.

Both L. N. Mishra and Bansi Lal, the two greatest courtiers of Indira Gandhi, were to become the biggest symbols of corruption in the country, sitting ducks for Jayaprakash Narayan. Both Mishra and Bansi Lal had started off as chelas of the great Sadachari, Gulzarilal Nanda, who as Nehru's Home Minister had vowed to root out corruption from the country. It was in the Bharat Sevak Samaj, Nanda's handiwork, that L. N. Mishra had first tried his hand at a game in which he later excelled. His partner then was a saffron-robed sadhu of Bihar who under the patronage of the sadhu-loving Nanda turned the Bharat Sevak Samaj into a well-oiled machine of corruption and fraud.

Mishra had gone through various phases before he ended up as Indira Gandhi's courtier. While he was a follower of Nanda, and his deputy in the Home Ministry, he was also close to Feroze Gandhi and a great chum of Tarkeshwari Sinha, then the glamour girl of Parliament. Until 1967-68, Mishra was against Indira Gandhi and in the general elections of 1967 he worked hard to defeat her group. A master collector, he got money from all possible sources, chartered a Dakota plane and sent Kamaraj, with an entourage of pressmen, to campaign in Patna, Bhuwaneswar, and some other places.

But his plans did not work. In the elections the Congress Party itself was badly mauled, but the principal casualties were the Syndicate leaders. Kamaraj lost in his home state, S. K. Patil was trounced in his own citadel, and Atulya Ghosh was swept off in West Bengal. Mishra was in a doghouse, on the verge of being thrown out of the ministry. But oily and smooth-tongued, he wheedled, cajoled, and buttered Raja Dinesh Singh for days on end and managed to retain his job.

He started courting the courtiers in a big way and soon wormed his way into Indira's court. The split of 1969 was an opportunity he utilized to the utmost. He proved to be a quick mobilizer of men and resources, a skilful back-room operator and a consumate horse-trader. Indira Gandhi rewarded him with the Ministry of Defence Production, one of the juiciest portfolios going. It was a bonanza; Mishra never looked back from then on.

Juice and honey flowed. One of Mishra's many permanent "sources" was a fast-living, hard-drinking army contractor who between one big deal and another tumbled in bed with some female politician or went for a quick one with some Army General. Mishra became a big money-spinner, a "Nagad Narayan" as he was later described in Parliament. "But to be fair to Mishraji," remarked one of his many admirers, "he never cornered what he got like some of the other ministers. He always passed on much of the funds he raised. He was as great a distributor as he was a collector."

The household expenses of many top leaders in Delhi and Patna were met almost entirely by Mishra. Regularly, every month, his agents delivered the famous "sealed envelopes" to editors and special correspondents in various cities. There were some who would not take his money or even the suit-lengths he brought from his visits abroad. With some of these people he would play cards and lose heavily to them. A few rare creatures, who would not oblige him even this way, never failed to get a special reverence from him. But he never gave up working on them.

His stock rose in Indira's court, but he had still not gained the position that he pined for. He had established a rapport with Yashpal Kapoor and Umashankar Dixit, and being a Russian lobbyist himself was thick with another caucus that had emerged. They were all proteges of P. N. Haksar, mostly people with a communist past: Rajni Patel, D. P. Dhar, Chandrajeet Yadav, Siddhartha Shankar Ray and, later, Dev Kant

Barooah.

Mishra, however, knew that he could never achieve the predominant place in the court as long as Haksar was around. There was another important man who wielded great influence on Indira Gandhi and who did not approve of Mishra's money-bag politics. The man was Mohan Kumaramangalam, one of Indira's heroes in her student days in England. He had joined as Minister of Steel and Heavy Engineering in March 1971, and was one of the few who could not be described as a courtier of Indira Gandhi, even as her Minister. He was a man Mishra considered a potential hurdle, but the first priority was to somehow elbow Haksar out of the way. Haksar had achieved his position not by sycophancy but by what he had done to raise her position to new heights. He had been her brain in all her successful moves. He was far too superior to be beaten on his own ground, and Mishra knew it too well. He found another way of defeating him. If Haksar had a complete hold over her mind, he would have a hold on her sentiments. He decided he would play on the greatest weakness of Indira Gandhi: Sanjay!

After three wild and dissolute years in England, Sanjay Gandhi had returned to India, without completing his course at the Rolls Royce. England had been no England for the boy after the Tejas had got into trouble and escaped to America and then to Costa Rica. Besides, his mother was now the Prime Minister. His dreams of becoming the Ford of India looked so much brighter now. He had no certificate from the Rolls Royce but he had learnt a lot in the "Teja School." His mother's efforts to persuade him to go back and complete his course failed; he was determined to stay and "make good." Just turned 20, he was far more headstrong than he had been when he left.

During one of his many youthful scrapes, Sanjay had met a character called Arjan Das who ran a puncture repair shop in South Delhi. He was a short, uncouth man, something of an underworld character, but the two had hit it off almost immediately ("because their IQ levels were the same," is one of the many explanations given by people who have known both of them), and Arjan Das had taken Sanjay to the junkyards of Gulabi Bagh in old Delhi, where the first Maruti was to be "cannibalized."

Before long there were others putting ideas into the boy's head. The discerning eyes of Yashpal Kapoor and L. N. Mishra had not missed the almost instinctive antipathies between Haksar and the boy, nor had they failed to realize the great hold that Sanjay had on his mother. Was it simply a mother's love for her son? Many thought there was much more to it than that.

There is the story of a nocturnal fight between the mother and the son at No. 1, Safdarjang Road. Here is an account by a staff of the former Prime Minister's house:

> The boy used to return very late in the night, often in quite a terrible state and he brought with him all sorts of people. . .you know what I mean. . . . The Prime Minister used to be very troubled. One night she instructed the staff not to open the doors if he came back with somebody very late. He came back late with a friend and started banging the door. He was obviously not quite himself. When there was no response, he started banging harder and grew abusive. Finally, the door opened and she stood there looking very grim and stern. "You have no business to come home like this and bring all sorts of people with you," she told him. "Shut up, you . . ." he barked. "You first throw out your wretched people and I'll not bring anybody." She flared up at him and there was quite an exchange between them. "All right, I am quitting," he threatened. "I'll not come back but tomorrow morning I'll hold a press conference and expose you before all the world." That did it. She broke down, and as far as I know she never again tried to tame him.

The *Washington Post* South Asia correspondent, Lewis M. Simons, who was expelled from India soon after the Emergency was clamped, reported that a family friend who attended a dinner party with Sanjay and Indira Gandhi said he saw the son slap his mother "six times" across the face. "She didn't do a thing," the friend said. "She just stood there and took it. She's scared to death of him."

What is it that she was so scared of? Was it some deep guilt in her? Or did he have something to blackmail her with? Or was it simply that she was one of those women who feel the psychic umbilical cord with such great intensity that they simply cannot think of their child leaving them? "The overindulgent mother," says an American lady psychiatrist, "who subjects her-

self completely to her children's tyranny, and who exerts her overprotection in this more passive way, is certainly a woman whose inner fear springs from masochistic guilt-laden sources."[19] Whatever the cause, there was no denying the fact that the boy had an abnormal hold on his famous mother.

Out to play on the weakness, L. N. Mishra soon became another Dharam Teja for Sanjay. "Just go ahead with your plans, Sanjayji," he told the boy, "you don't have to bother about land or money. What are we for?" The boy wanted his Detroit-like factory somewhere close to his mother's seat of power. It was Mishra who thought of the bright idea. There were miles and miles of fields just beyond Palam. They fell in the jurisdiction of Haryana state which made it all the better, for his long-time pal and fellow-chela of Nanda had by sheer chance become the Chief Minister there. He immediately got in touch with this chum, took him into confidence, and told him it was going to be an "investment of a life time" and he must never miss an opportunity like that. Bansi Lal needed no convincing; he jumped at the idea. Even while Indira Gandhi was scaling the heights of glory, the ground was being prepared for her fall. A mammoth structure, a monument of nepotism and corruption, rose on the lands of over 1,500 poor peasants who were evicted by the strong-arm methods of a Jat bully.

One man who had advised Indira Gandhi against Maruti right in the beginning was P. N. Haksar. He had told her plainly that it would land her into trouble some day. That in itself would have been enough to set the boy against Haksar. But he had been difficult in other ways too. "There had been bad blood between the two men for years," wrote J. Anthony Lukas in the *New York Times*, "dating from the day when Haksar had to get Sanjay out of several youthful scrapes involving drink, cars and women. Most recently, Sanjay Gandhi blamed Haksar for hostility to the Maruti project and for refusal to backdate a letter which would have legalized one of his mother's disputed election practices."

Yashpal Kapoor and Umashankar Dixit were finding Haksar a big hurdle in many of their operations. If, for instance, Kapoor had to strike a deal with the groundnut industry, the policy clearance would have to come from Haksar and he would just sit over it. If Kapoor or Dixit or even Indira Gandhi herself wanted the intelligence agencies to do a particular job for them, they had to go through Haksar.

A stage soon came when Indira Gandhi herself started feeling that Haksar had become too important. She herself had grown so tall that she thought she was invincible. Already in 1972 she had been bathed in a "super-heated rhetoric." She was no longer just a political leader, but the very personification of India. Three years before the Emergency, tall hoardings had gone up in the center of Connaught Place in New Delhi, with the message in huge big letters: "Think Big, Do Big for the Leader is Right and the Future is Bright." Like the courtiers around the Virgin Queen in Elizabethan England, the pathetic little boot-lickers in Delhi's corridors of power were for ever gripped with the tensions of who was "in" and who was "out." Every now and then they could hear the bells toll, but for whom? Will she, won't she, will she, won't she, will she keep me on? That was a question they all kept asking themselves, whether it was Y. B. Chavan in Delhi or S. S. Ray in far off West Bengal. If only somebody could reassure them! But who? A consummate actress like Elizabeth I, she always kept them guessing, always on tenter-hooks.

She had lacked brains, but she had always loved power, power at any cost. Even as a long-legged scrawny little girl in Anand Bhawan, she had often gathered the many servants of the house, stood up on the table and delivered her commands to them.

The Nehrus, it would appear, had the seeds of autocracy somewhere in them. Writing under a pseudonym in a Calcutta newspaper many years ago, Nehru had asked if it wasn't possible that he might consider himself a Caesar. "Here lies the danger Jawaharlal represents to India," he wrote. "It would certainly be horrid if, some day, he were to forget the opposition must be overcome, not swept away, and if he were to come to believe himself unexpendable."

What he had only feared, his daughter carried out. "My father was a statesman, I'm of a different stuff," she had once said. She wanted the best of both worlds; the prestige of a democrat and the powers of an autocrat.

It was her husband who perhaps first called her a "fascist," way back in 1959 when she was the Congress President. Indira Gandhi had been

[19] Helene Deutsch, *Psychology of Women*, Part 2.

lobbying hard for intervention in Kerala and Feroze had taken a stand against it. He thought it was undemocratic to dismiss an elected government, whether it was a communist government or otherwise. The issue had come up at breakfast table at Teen Murti House, and there had been quite a row between Indira and Feroze, with Nehru looking on very distressed.[20]

"It is just not right," Feroze had said, "You are bullying people. You are a fascist."

Indira Gandhi had flared up. "You are calling me a fascist. I can't take that." And she had walked out of the room in rage.

Years after, after she had become the Prime Minister, she made a remark to a foreign lady journalist, which was a clear indication of the way her mind was working. After a long interview in her office in South Block, Indira Gandhi had walked down with the lady journalist. Outside they had come across an aged beggar in a heap of rags and the journalist had murmured: "Things certainly move a bit slowly in India." Oriana Fallaci had barely uttered the words when "five steely fingers" gripped her arm and an icy voice retorted: "What do you want me to do? I'm surrounded by a bunch of idiots. And democracy. . . ."

That showed her arrogance as well as despair. Later, power went to her head and when that happened nobody was unexpendable except herself. P. N. Haksar left in January 1973. In early February, the "Empress of India" elevated L. N. Mishra to the cabinet rank, gave the home portfolio to her former "munimji," Pandit Umashankar Dixit, the juicy foreign trade to an inexperienced but a potential collector. D. P. Chattopadhya, who could go about the operations with philosophic calm and brought in as Deputy Minister an obedient young man from West Bengal, who was later to handle the country's banking operations to the best advantage of Indira Gandhi's heir apparent. One big hurdle that the tuft-hunters gathering fast around Sanjay Gandhi could have faced was Mohan Kumaramangalam, but he died in an air crash in June 1973.

With the prop that had held Indira Gandhi gone, she fell to her own base level. In August 1973, Chandra Shekhar (now Chairman of the Janata Party) told a Bombay weekly that the Congress Party had "once again become the victim of coteries and cliques." What was emerging was not a socialist army but an "Indira menagerie."

The operations of Indira and her courtiers were getting cruder and cruder. Gujarat was up in flames and anger was slowly mounting in Bihar. Commented a socialist journal of Delhi: "There is at least one scandal every day in Indira Gandhi's government of which she herself is the centre. Nagarwala case, Maruti, Mastan, Kapadia, are some of the innumerable scandals with which the Prime Minister had been connected directly. Thanks to her, all these scandals are destroying the country. . . ."[21]

The licence-cum-forgery racket burst like a stink bomb in the 1974 autumn session of Parliament, one of the most dismal in the country's parliamentary history. The shocking revelations jolted the lackeys and yes-men of the Prime Minister. But by her steam-roller majority, she had reduced Parliament to no more than her rubber-stamp. A shattering blow had been dealt to public confidence in parliamentary system as an effective instrument of good government. Wrote her one time friend, Romesh Thapar: "Indira Gandhi cannot act because she will have to destroy her closest collaborators who have destroyed the credibility of the party."

By late 1974, Indira Gandhi was clearly moving fast towards authoritarianism. The so-called "Kashmiri Mafia" which had wielded power in her court had been replaced by the "Punjabi Mafia," composed of crude roughies like Bansi Lal and the whole lot of tuft-hunters who had crept into the corridors of power along with Sanjay's ex-model wife, Maneka. Already some cronies of the Prime Minister had floated the idea of "limited democracy" and Indira's CPI caucus was clamouring for a clamp-down on "fascist Jayaprakash." In October, the CPI lobbyist, D. K. Barooah was brought in as Congress President and the so-called "anti-fascist" jamborees began all over the country. The wishy-washy 13-point programme that came out from the secret conclave at Narora was only a cover for the inner group's decision to come down with a heavy hand on anybody who challenged her authority. By then she had also decided to get rid of some of her political liabilities. At one point she even toyed with the idea of another "Kamaraj Plan," mainly as an excuse to drop L. N. Mishra who had by then become too po-

[20] Related by Nikhil Chakravartty to the author.

[21] *Pratipaksha.*

werful and too much of a political liability for her. But as it so happened, Mishra fell a victim to a bomb explosion.

By 1975 Indira Gandhi had been reduced to straits, and so had her darling son, Sanjay Gandhi. The huge Detroit-like factory building had gone up, but there was no money to equip it with machines. Many business tycoons had contributed substantially to the share capital of the "big man's small car," but by 1975, Maruti Ltd. had mobilized only about Rs.6 crores in the form of loans, dealer deposits, and paid-up capital. This was far short of Rs.60-70 crores needed to put the project going. He was constantly in need of money, more and more money. Even the establishment expenses were becoming a problem. The oil price hike had already hit the car industry so badly that there was no room for another car in the market, a so-called "people's car" now to be priced at Rs.24,000. He knew he had failed, but he had to prove that he hadn't failed. He turned to public financial institutions for help. But they wanted "concrete evidence" that his factory could turn out cars, and he had no such evidence.

In utter despair, he had thought of "diversifying" the factory and had started making bus bodies, mostly for the Haryana State Transport Corporation, thanks to his great chum, Bansi Lal. But he still had bigger things in mind: collaborations with American and German firms, contracts from the public sector enterprises, defence contracts. But all these required the constant flow of money and that in turn necessitated that he and his mother had untrammelled power. Dictatorship was the logical extension of both his mother's policies and his own ambitions.

The judgment of the Allahabad High Court came in handy. On 12 June 1975, Sanjay Gandhi had rushed back from the Maruti factory on hearing the news. A pall of gloom had descended on No. 1, Safdarjang Road. He had rushed in, clasped his mother in his arms and sobbed. But later, while Indira Gandhi conferred with her partymen in one of the rooms. Sanjay and his goons met separately to chalk out their strategy. The ticker-tapes had started giving the results of the Gujarat elections. Another defeat. Only that morning D. P. Dhar, a confidant of Indira Gandhi, had passed away. Tragedy heaped upon tragedy.

Indira Gandhi had made up her mind to quit, at least for the interregnum, till the Supreme Court gave its verdict on her petition. She had even written out a letter of resignation, but Sanjay had other plans. He had rushed to her room, snatched the letter from her hand, and said: "Mummy, you will never get power back this way."[22] Tearing the letter, he had said firmly, "Now let me take care of the situation." Behind him stood his hatchetman, Bansi Lal.

Bansi Lal: The Jat Bully

"I KNOW Esser is a scoundrel," Hitler used to say about one of his evil spirits, "but I shall hold on to him as long as he can be of use to me.

This was to be Indira Gandhi's attitude towards most of her close collaborators, no matter how murky their past—or indeed their present. One such man who was of immense use to her was Bansi Lal, a name that became a byword for crudeness and barbaric depravity.

The man had risen from the dark cauldron of Haryana politics. No sooner the state was formed on 1 November 1966 than it got embroiled in cut-throat factionalism. The first Chief Minister, Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, had to contend with his powerful Jat rivals, Devi Lal and Sher Singh. Both of them had fought a long battle with Partap Singh Kairon, left the Congress, and then returned to it after the formation of Haryana had become a certainty. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma had been in office for only four months when the general elections of 1967 came. The Congress returned to power and Sharma was once again

[22] An eyewitness to the author in an interview.

elected Chief Minister, much to the chagrin of Indira Gandhi because he was close to her rival, Morarji Desai. But she was still a long way from becoming the "Empress" who could change her jagirdars at will. Those were the days when she had to content herself with petty maoneuvres and machinations.

Within days the new Haryana Assembly turned into a hunting ground for political opportunists and double-crossers. When the House met to elect the Speaker, 12 Congress legislators joined hands with the opposition and defeated the official Congress candidate. Defectionism had reared its ugly head. The disease which was to turn into a countrywide epidemic was the creation of Indira Gandhi's petty manoeuvres.

In barely 13 days, Sharma's government was out. Once the *Aya Ram Gaya Ram* cult was born, there was no stopping it. Power passed to a United Front government headed by Rao Birendra Singh, a soldier-turned-politician who had defected from the Congress and was to prove himself a clever hand at the continuing game of defections and counter-defections. Things came to such a pass that within a fortnight one legislator changed sides three times and another five times. Months passed and Rao Birendra Singh's ministry was still there. In utter desperation, the Congress struck a deal with Devi Lal, one of the main architects of the United Front, whereby the party pledged to support a minority government under him, if he could manage enough defections from the United Front. Devi Lal tried hard, but Rao proved more dexterous.

When eight months passed, Indira Gandhi decided that enough was enough. The Governor, B. N. Chakravarty, was summoned to Delhi and told that it was time he "intervened." Suddenly, Chakravarty's "blood began to boil" at the game of defections and he prepared a report full of righteous indignation, recommending the dissolution of the Assembly. According to Hardwari Lal, a former Minister and Vice-Chancellor of Kurukshetra University, during the next six months of President's rule, Governor Chakravarty "sedulously prepared the ground for Congress victory in the mid-term poll. . . . Many a Governor has done much during the last two decades to bring the Governor's institution into ridicule. Mr Chakravarty would have to be given the first place in the list."[1]

While giving tickets for the mid-term elections, the Congress Party decided to keep out the faction leaders. The party won a majority (48 seats in a House of 81) but it was found that even the new Congress Legislature Party had nearly 35 supporters of Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, a persona non grata for Indira Gandhi. Though Sharma had been kept out of the elections, his supporters pressed that he should be elected the leader. To scuttle this, Indira Gandhi got a snap decision taken by the Congress Parliamentary Board to restrict the choice of leader to members of the state legislature.

She also sent her two kitchen-cabinet "boys," Dinesh Singh and I. K. Gujral, to Gulzarilal Nanda, the "godfather" of Haryana politics, to persuade him to keep Sharma out of the run.

"Have anybody but not him," the emissaries told Nanda.

"But who? Where is the other man?" Nanda asked.

"Why, you can have anyone from the elected legislators," said one of the emissaries. "You can choose this gentleman if you like," he had said casually, pointing to a lanky, bespectacled man standing obsequiously behind Nanda.

Nanda had turned round to see the man. Ah, it was his good old Bansi, his chela and errand-boy. Ever since he had come to the Rajya Sabha in 1960, by a sheer quirk of destiny, this rustic briefless lawyer from Bhiwani had become a great devotee of Nanda. The man always hung around him, always at his beck and call. The man had been elected to the State Assembly but Nanda could never have thought of him as Chief Minister. In fact, after he had ceased to be the Union Home Minister, Nanda had nursed a lurking hope that he might be called upon to be the Chief Minister himself. But since that didn't seem to be getting anywhere, wouldn't the next best thing be to rule the state through a dummy?

Nanda thought for a minute or two. Then he smiled his Mephistophelean smile and declared, "All right, let it be Bansi Lal."

Even Sharma had later concurred with the decision, more out of pique than anything else. Better far to have a non-entity, he thought, than to let one of his rivals grab the job. "Let it go. Bansi, you know, will resign whenever we ask him to," Nanda had told him. Little did they know that they were creating a Frankenstein!

The seeds of crudeness, intrigue, and trickery

[1] *Anatomy of a Chief Minister.*

were sown quite early in his life. Bansi Lal's physical roughness and mental barrenness were akin to the sandy wilderness of Gola Garh, the village where he was born. A harsh and eerie landscape often swept by blinding sandstorms from across the Rajasthan border, the trees gnarled and spiky, the earth cracked and chafed with frequent droughts which turned so quickly into famines. An environment as repellent as the man it produced. A petty lot of uncouth habitation amidst an atmosphere of grim poverty with lots of petty feuds and frequent brawls. Bansi Lal's vulgar language could well be traced back to those early days.

His father, Mohar Singh, was not really in the depths of poverty but if the police record of the village are any indication, he had acquired notoriety as a "crafty man" who could not easily be trusted. One entry by the Station House Officer in the village crime notebook said: "Mohar Singh Jat (Bansi Lal's father) is an artificial or pretentious sort of person. He wants to establish his prestige by bringing to bear all kinds of pressures on the police. The man is unreliable." This was dated 1 July 1950.[2]

But to go back a little, when Bansi Lal was a boy of 14, his father moved with the family to a nearby place called Loharu, the capital of a petty Nawabdom. Mohar Singh, who had even earlier tried to ingratiate himself with the rapacious Nawab whenever he passed through Gola Garh on one of his predatory missions, now became a petty courtier at Loharu. An eulogistic biography of Bansi Lal[3] gave this description of the Nawab's court: "Corruption raged in every department in all its oppressive viciousness. The durbar itself was unbridled in its pursuit after wealth for personal gratification. The whole hierarchy of officialdom, from the Dewan downwards, was engaged shamelessly in catering to what seemed to be irrepressible lust for money. Nobody cared for the common man who was left to die of hunger or thirst or through sheer frustration." By all accounts, a very faithful picture of the Loharu court, but the writer could hardly be credible when he observed that Bansi Lal was "shocked" and "appalled" by it all. On the contrary, it would appear from the way he later turned the whole of Haryana into a far more grotesque Nawabdom and then proceeded to make the whole country the same, that he must have loved his childhood durbar. It was there that he learnt his first lessons in intrigue, corruption, tyranny, and palace manoeuvres.

The area around had much else to teach the growing boy. Often called the gateway to Rajasthan, the Loharu-Bhiwani area was a hunting ground for smugglers, freebooters, and crooks out to get rich quick. "Not possessing any other source of revenue, the nawabs of Loharu condoned, and even abetted, illegalities in trading." This pathological, evil-smelling world, where everyone was on edge for a chance to scramble upwards, became Bansi Lal's home and formative background.

For several years he worked as a *muneem* in a grain shop, loading and unloading grain bags, weighing at the scales, keeping the ledgers. Then for a time he ran a bus service in partnership with some relatives. He himself worked as the conductor, and sometimes when no driver was available he would sit at the wheels. Many persons in the area still remember him as a "foul-mouthed conductor who always abused and bullied the poor passengers and extorted extra money from them."

But Bansi Lal was an ambitious man. He was not leaving any avenues for going up in life. While he was doing all the other things and learning all the great lessons at the Nawab's court, he was also after other qualifications. Always a great believer in short-cuts, Bansi Lal managed to pass the "Prabhakar" examination from Bhatinda which enabled a person to sit for that peculiar brand of B.A. "in English Only." And so some years later he got a B. A. too—"B.A. via Bhatinda," as the Haryana MP, Sher Singh, contemptuously calls it.

Both Sher Singh and Devi Lal, one of the first mentors of Bansi Lal, are unanimous about the man's one great quality: "He has always been a first-rate political tout." At first, he was the "tout" of Devi Lal himself, that rough-hewn Jat leader from Hissar district who has been in and out of different parties half a dozen times. After his long "apprenticeship" under Devi Lal, during which he learnt the essentials of political crookery, Bansi Lal went to Delhi, by another quirk of destiny, as a member of the Rajya Sabha, and for the next six years "he served as a tout of Gulzarilal Nanda"[4] along with his chela-in-arms, Lalit Narayan Mishra. Gradually, he touted up the ladder and finally became the "tout-in-chief"

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Muni Lal, *Bansi Lal: Profile of a Chief Minister.*

[4] Sher Singh in an interview with the author.

of Indira Gandhi and Sanjay. But no, there can hardly be any finality about such slippery characters, there is no knowing whose man he might next become.

Devi Lal remembers vividly the long-legged, long-faced young man who used to come to see him frequently during the late forties. Bansi Lal was then studying law in a Jullunder college and Devi Lal was already a force to be reckoned with in Punjab Congress politics. "I was on the look out," says Devi Lal, "for some educated man who could assist me in Hissar district politics. This young chap used to hang around me and I started giving him lift. First I got him into the Mandal Congress Committee and then later into the District Congress Committee. He always used to show himself as a loyal type of man. Once he bungled with some accounts and when I reprimanded him he started weeping and I forgave him."

In 1960, four Rajya Sabha seats from the state fell vacant and a panel of names was sent to the then Congress President, U. N. Dhebar, a Gandhite for whom politics was primarily caste. Dhebar did not want a Jat to go to the Rajya Sabha, presumably because of an inbuilt aversion to the community. In the panel he saw the name "Hukam Singh" and said that must be a Jat; he promptly crossed it out. Why blame the comical Dev Kant Barooah for his obsession with caste? Wasn't he only presiding over the liquidation of a caste-obsessed party which had gone rotten to the core long ago?

Dhebar sent the panel of names back, but the Jats were not to be outdone so easily. "We decided to send a name which did not sound like a Jat name at all," says Devi Lal, in a conspiratorial whisper even now, 17 years later. "The name that struck me was Bansi Lal. That was very much a Bania-like name, I thought, and Dhebar Bhai ought to like it."

Bansi Lal knew nothing about it. When he saw the name in the list he went to Devi Lal and asked, "Who is this Bansi Lal?" He could never imagine that he would be nominated for the Rajya Sabha. "Oh, that's some Bansi Lal Mehta," Devi Lal told him.

Dhebar reacted to the name just as the Jat leaders had thought. "Bansi Lal, B.A., LL.B."—it sounded all right to him and he okayed it, without asking any further questions. That is how great decisions have been taken by that august party which ruled the country for three decades! When the list was officially released, Devi Lal told Bansi Lal, "This is *your* name." He looked dumb-founded. And so the man went to the Rajya Sabha. "He is a terrific sycophant," says Devi Lal. "In the Rajya Sabha he used to lobby for me. He once gave a speech at Fatehabad and said 'Devi Lal is my father.' A great *dalal*,! that man. Soon he became the *dalal* of Nanda. He was almost his domestic servant."

He served Nanda so well that when Bhagwat Dayal Sharma became the first Chief Minister of Haryana, the great Sadachari tried hard to make Bansi Lal a deputy minister but Sharma rejected him because of his shady past.

Bansi Lal, according to an oft-told tale, abstained from voting in the Haryana Assembly Speaker's election in 1967 in return for a bribe of Rs.200 from Devi Lal, But Devi Lal puts it somewhat differently.

> The bribe story, you see, is not really true. All that happened was that I told him not to go for the voting and he had obeyed. He just stayed on in the bathroom all the time, having a long bath. I had told him to do that. He was an obedient boy. Money of course I always gave him, sometimes two hundred, sometimes five hundred.
>
> Came the mid-term elections of 1968. Bansi Lal was elected, and I used him to create an atmosphere against Bhagwat Dayal Sharma who was again trying to become the Chief Minister. I told Bansi, "Go and stick to Bhagwat Dayal, try to create the impression that you are very loyal to him, and meanwhile I will try that he does not become the CM." Bansi did just as I had told him. Sharma was outmanoeuvred and as it so happened the great sycophant himself emerged as the Chief Minister of Haryana.

On 19 May 1968, Bansi Lal was elected leader of the Haryana Congress Legislature Party. Very little was known about the man, except that he was 41 years old, the youngest Chief Minister in the country, and had been President of a Mandal Congress Committee in Hissar district until 1960. He had begun by saying, at his first press conference at Nanda's house, that "my first and foremost concern will be to provide the state with a clean, efficient and impartial administration."[5] Many had welcomed his youth and rusticity, thinking perhaps that he

[5] *Indian Express*, 20 May 1968.

was something like Gandhiji's conception of a "peasant-leader." Many newspapers had described him just as a "dark horse." That he indeed was, but nobody knew then how black he would turn out to be.

He was soon to show his real self. Posted in Delhi at that time was a Press Liaison Officer of the Haryana government, a man named Rajendra Sareen, who had earlier been a special correspondent of a Delhi newspaper. Within a short time, Sareen had some peppery encounters with the new Chief Minister which showed him in the raw.

The first was during Bansi Lal's very first press conference. In reply to questions on the future of Chandigarh, the new Chief Minister said he was not at all convinced that Haryana's interests demanded the city's inclusion in the state. This, in the background of the protracted wrangle between Punjab and Haryana over Chandigarh, was quite a statement! With his newsman's instinct, Sareen immediately knew that the Chief Minister had committed a faux pas, and he thought it his duty to intervene.

"If I may have your permission, Sir, I would request the press correspondents to treat your remark as off the record," Sareen said to Bansi Lal.

Visibly irritated, the Chief Minister looked at him hard. With a mixture of pique and annoyance, he said in his crude Haryanvi: "Do as you like. I have said what I wanted to."

Sareen could see how much annoyance he had caused, but he requested the correspondents to treat the remark as off the record. He did not know that the Nawab of Haryana had made a mental note of his crime.

Before going back to Chandigarh, Bansi Lal told Sareen, "Look, Nandaji is my guru. His commands should be obeyed."

What sort of commands? Nanda was his guru, but officially he had no position in the Haryana government. Sareen wanted the Chief Minister to clarify his parting orders. Newsmen-turned-officers are a strange kettle of fish. They remain both newsmen and officers and yet in a way they are neither newsmen nor officers. They are somewhere in between, a strange mixture, and such a man can be very irritating to an autocrat who expects his officers to be blind yes-men.

This was the second time in two days that Sareen had thrown his weight in his way; part of it of course Sareen could not help—his physical weight was enormous. "You ask too many questions," Bansi Lal told him irascibly. "I am not used to all this question-answer," he added and his car drove off.

What a cocky man, thought Sareen. Even so, he did a good job of pleasing Bansi Lal's guru. Nanda's commands were usually of petty nature, not very difficult to obey. But at times he gave bizarre orders. One day, for instance, he called Sareen and said: "You see, a professor from Chandigarh wrote to me some days back requesting for my bio-data. He wants to write a book on my dedicated life and mission. But unfortunately I have misplaced the letter and I do not remember either the professor's name or his address. Could you please find out who it was?"

"Sir, I'll see what can be done," said Sareen. Not the one to give up challenges easily, Sareen promptly sent off circular letters to all the college principals and heads of department in Chandigarh and the professor who wanted to write on Nanda's "dedicated life and mission" was traced within three days.

"Not even the intelligence agencies of the Home Ministry could have done it so fast," exclaimed Nanda very appreciatively. The old man started praising Sareen to everybody. What an efficient man!

This should have gone down well with Nanda's old chela, Bansi Lal. But soon the wily man from Gola Garh decided to cut himself loose from his "gurus" and "fathers" and launch himself independently. In that quest, the Chief Minister was at first willing to do anything to oblige Bhagwat Dayal Sharma who was still a force in Haryana politics. Sharma had a long-standing grudge against the Pradesh Congress Committee chief, Ramkrishna Gupta. To oblige Sharma, Bansi Lal ordered the institution of some cases against Gupta, a method he used with great abandon in the years to come. The cases instituted, the Superintendent of Police was asked to arrest Gupta. But it was not all that easy. Gupta, apart from being the PCC chief, was also a member of Parliament. He approached Y. B. Chavan, the then Home Minister, who in turn telephoned Nanda and told him to ensure that Gupta was not arrested. It would create political complications. But before Nanda could contact Bansi Lal, he had 'disappeared." Nobody seemed to know where he was.

Sareen got a telephone call from Nanda. "Gupta must not be arrested," Nanda ordered.

"You must see to it."

Sareen telephoned the Superintendent of Police, Mahendragarh, the place where the arrest was to be made. "People have already been asked to arrest Guptaji," the SP said.

"No, no, please stop the arrest," Sareen pressed. He explained to the SP the background against which he was making the request. "Don't do it until you have met the Chief Minister."

It was nearly midnight when Sareen went to the Canal Rest House of the Haryana government where Bansi Lal was hiding, but he was not there. He left a note informing the Chief Minister the circumstances in which Gupta's arrest had been stopped. Sareen's "crimes" were mounting.

Then one night Bansi Lal telephoned Sareen from Kashmir.

"Fix up appointments for me with the editors of the *Times of India* and the *Statesman*," he ordered.

"Sir, could I know what kind of appointments you want? Should I call them for dinner or something?"

"You ask too many questions," came the irritated Haryanvi voice.

"No Sir, I just wanted to know whether it's to be just a social get-together or whether you wanted to discuss something specific with them. They might want to know, Sir."

"Shiqayat karni hai" (I have to make a complaint), he said gruffly. "Their correspondents have been writing against me. I have to set them right."

The newsman in Sareen was again at the top. He thought this wouldn't be the right thing to do. This may only prejudice the newspapers further. Besides, the correspondents in question were old colleagues of Sareen, professional men who had only been doing their job. There could be better ways of tackling them.

"Sir, please don't bring me into this," said Sareen.

"Do as you like," barked Bansi Lal and banged the phone.

And then came the biggest fracas. On the evening of 30 October 1968, *Jashn-e-Haryana* was celebrated at Faridabad to mark the second anniversary of the state's creation. In his speech, the Chief Guest, S. Nijalingappa, who was then the Congress President, proclaimed that Bansi Lal's government would not fall so long as he was the head of the Congress. Bansi Lal had done everything he could to win the support of Nijalingappa and now here he was publicly declaring his blessings. That was a million dollar declaration for Bansi Lal and he expected to see it splashed in big bold headlines in all the Delhi newspapers next morning. Sareen had taken care to carry a well-chosen press party to the Faridabad function. Proper coverage was ensured, but the celebrations had continued till almost midnight and there had been much wining and dining. The pressmen had mutually agreed to hold the story for the night.

At 6.40 next morning, Sareen's phone started ringing. Drowsily he picked up the receiver and got a shock. "You sabotaged the news," somebody shouted full blast.

"Who is speaking?" Sareen asked.

"I am not Who! I am Bansi Lal."

"Good morning, Sir."

"Good morning ka bachcha, Itni bhi khabar gol kar di tumne?" barked Bansi Lal.

"Sir, let me just explain. . . ."

"I don't listen to explanations."

"Sir, the fact is. . . ." Again he was cut short.

"Fact. . . . What fact? I know what the fact is. This has become the centre of a conspiracy against me and *you* are masterminding it."

"But please listen to me. I shall explain. . . . I'll satisfy you. . . ."

"Who the hell are you to satisfy me?"

"But please listen to me, Sir."

"You are trying to overawe me with English, you. . . ."

"Sir, whether you listen to me in Hindi or in English, I would just like to tell you. . . ."

"Who the hell are you to tell me anything?" roared the Chief Minister.

"*Aap malik hain*. . . ." (you are the master).

"That I am, and not because you say so. . . ."

"Whatever you order, Sir. . . ."

"Order? I am going to order your dismissal."

"In that case what can I say, Sir?"

"*Tu gustakhi se bolta hai? Bahen*. . ." (You talk impertinently? You).

It was getting too much, but still Sareen tried to keep his cool. He said: "Sir, you are the Chief Minister and I am obliged to show an attitude of respect towards you, but I am not used to this kind of language. . . . It becomes impossible."

"Oh yes, I will call you a *Bahen*. . . . You are a *Bahen*. . . . You are a *Bahen*. . . ." He was literally shrieking, almost in hysterics.

Sareen couldn't hold himself any longer. "Are you a Chief Minister or a bloody street

dog. . . ?" He gave it back to him, full blast.

Bansi Lal banged the receiver. He cancelled all his engagements in Delhi, rushed back to Chandigarh, and sacked Sareen the same evening. A special messenger served the order on him next day.

Sareen went in writ petition in Delhi High Court, challenging the order. At the end of the long legal wrangle that followed, the judge observed: "I am not impressed by the denial of respondent (Bansi Lal) and would rather prefer the petitioner's (Rajendra Sareen) version. . . . It would appear that his denial is, to say the least, disingenuous. . . ." The case had thoroughly exposed Bansi Lal as an untruthful man who had no compunction in making false statements on oath.

The horrors of the Emergency were nothing new for Haryana. It had been under the grip of a monstrous rule from long before. Bansi Lal ruled over the state through a small coterie of politicians and officials as unscrupulous as himself. Many find it difficult to decide who of the two was worse: Bansi Lal or his alter ego, S. K. Misra. In this young IAS officer from Kanpur, first introduced to him by his chum, Lalit Narayan Mishra, Bansi Lal had found an excellent partner.

With his long sideburns and thick moustache, this fair and slim young man dressed in smartly tailored safari suits or gaudy bushshirts looked more like a Box-wallah than a bureaucrat. He seldom smiled in public and when he did it was more a grin than a smile. Back in the University of Allahabad, Misra had been a quiet, sober student, never very great at ragging the freshers in the hostel which had quite a reputation for its atrocious ragging. His friends who knew him then would find it hard to imagine him in the new role he assumed under, or rather in partnership with Bansi Lal.

There was hardly anything in Bansi Lal's Nawabdom that was not under this young man's purview. Apart from being the Chief Minister's Principal Secretary, he was concurrently Secretary of half a dozen departments. According to the Union Home Ministry's instructions, no IAS officer could hold more than one cadre post at a time for more than a year. The rulers of Haryana had their own way of circumventing the rule. Misra was sent on a jaunt abroad, of course at government expenses, while some dummies kept his seats hot for him. He returned and assumed command over all the departments again, and at the end of another year he was off again to a foreign land. Perhaps no other IAS officer in the country would have made as many trips abroad on such frivolous assignments as Misra during his years of glory in Haryana. He was a comparatively junior officer, with many years to go before he could become a Commissioner. But Bansi Lal did not believe in rules and delays, not when they stood in the way of his favourites. Without much ado he promoted Misra to Commissioner's rank, and with him all others who would otherwise have been superseded.

Another member of the Bansi Lal caucus was R. C. Mehtani who, like Indira Gandhi's R. K. Dhawan, was just a steno-typist when Bansi Lal took over. But he proved to be such an invaluable hatchetman that he was soon promoted to the provincial civil service. Then onwards he just raced upwards; he jumped to a new scale every few months it seemed, but he could hardly have bothered about the pay scales. That was peanuts for a man who handled most of the big deals of the rapacious ruler of Haryana. The Nawab of Loharu had been left far behind.

No officer or politician who did not surrender to the Misra-Mehtani axis could have any future in Bansi Lal's Haryana. Between the two they organized a vast espionage network in the state, and used it to locate and stifle any opposition anywhere in the state. In the first six and a half years of Bansi Lal's rule (the period before the Emergency) the state police took into custody more than 143,000 people belonging to different walks of life. There was hardly a recalcitrant political opponent who was not pushed into the jail on one pretext or the other.

At one time one of the closest political associates of Bansi Lal was Chaudhuri Bhajan Lal, now a Janata Party MP. They were great friends and Bhajan Lal was considered the No. 2 man in the state. On some issue they fell out and a conspiracy was promptly hatched to bring Bhajan Lal down to his knees. The Bansi Lal mafia got the Panipat police to force a woman of the area, Kailasi, to give a statement alleging that Bhajan Lal had raped her. That did it. Bhajan Lal knuckled down. That done, the police were ordered to get another statement from the woman saying that her previous statement was false.

Chaudhuri Dharam Singh was an old and res-

pected lawyer of Panipat. He committed the crime of denouncing the corrupt and atrocious rule of Bansi Lal at a public meeting also addressed by Chaudhuri Charan Singh, now the Union Home Minister. Bansi Lal's orders went out to the Panipat police. The old man was arrested, stripped naked, his face was tarred, and in this state he was dragged all through the streets of the town. The policemen kept kicking him with their boots all the way. When a complaint was made to Bansi Lal, he smiled and ordered the promotions of the police officers.

The boorish Gauleiter of Haryana had a pathological hatred for anything that had to do with intellect or culture. He couldn't stand scholars or educationists or artists. To him they were all "parasites." Least of all could he stand journalists, particularly the ones who would not cringe and crawl before him. As the Defence Minister later he was to boast at a press conference at Lucknow that "we have brought newspapermen down to the level where they ought to be"—the "drain-level."

Ten months before the Emergency, Bansi Lal and his goons wreaked such vengeance on a Bhiwani newspaper which had had the guts to criticize his barbarous ways that one could only wonder if this country has ever really been a democracy. It all started on a July evening in 1974. Suddenly a senior officer of the municipality arrived at the office of the *Chetna* with a gang of about 30 workmen armed with spades and crowbars. They at once started knocking down a front portion of the building. The Manager, Rabindranath Vasisht, protested and told them that the required penalty for the extra construction had already been paid to the municipality and the authorization had been received. Besides, the Editor was away, and if they insisted on the demolition could they please come later?

The Municipal Officer took the Manager aside and told him: "Look, we are not interested in damaging you. If you want to get out of this hassle all you have to do is to stop writing against the Chief Minister and his men. If your Editor is willing to give a written undertaking that he will stop his tirade I assure you no harm will come to the newspaper."

Rabindranath Vasisht and his son, Devabrata Vasisht, who was the newspaper's Editor, refused to give any such undertaking. "We are running a newspaper, not a Bania shop," they told the officer who had made the suggestion. To break his morale, the old man was arrested and later released on bail.

In the early hours of 26 June 1975 when the silence of a graveyard was descending on the country, policemen swooped on their home and arrested the Editor and his father. They were implicated in 13 trumped-up-cases. But the Vasishts were not to be cowed down so easily. Devabrata's wife took charge of the newspaper and continued its publication.

The demolition squads hammered away at the building and night after night goondas were let loose in the house to terrorize the women and children.

On 29 June, the district officers of Hissar summoned the 17-year-old son of Devabrata Vasisht and told him: "If you and your mother give us in writing that henceforth your paper will not publish anything against Bansi Lal and his men we shall release your father and grandfather. Otherwise. . . ." Where many a great editor of the country had knuckled down at the very word "Emergency," there were some here and there who still valued their pen.

On the evening of 20 February 1976, the boy was brutally attacked outside his gate. The electric bulb on the street had been smashed. In the dark, the assailants came down on the boy with iron rods, chains, lathis, and belts. For six hours the boy lay bleeding. The police refused to record the first information report, the local doctors were too frightened to give even first aid to the boy. It was only very reluctantly that a doctor later agreed to go to the house in a curtained car. The dying boy was carried to the Rohtak Medical College and it was 31 hours after the attack that he regained consciousness.

The attack had allegedly been "supervised" by Surinder Singh, the second son of Bansi Lal. Thirty-year-old Surinder was the virtual Nawab of Bhiwani, a mini Gauleiter, in many ways more crude and brutal than his father.

By a strange coincidence, the notorious son of Partap Singh Kairon (a former Chief Minister of Punjab who was indicted for corruption by the Das Commission of Inquiry and was shot dead on a highway) was also Surinder by name. Bansi Lal had tried to fashion himself after Kairon and his son perhaps had made Surinder Kairon his hero. But as one Chandigarh journalist said, it would be an insult to Partap Singh Kairon to compare Bansi Lal to him. In spite of all his

faults, Kairon was a man with human qualities whereas Bansi Lal was untouched by anything human. He was certainly as inferior to Kairon as his great protector, Indira Gandhi, was to Kairon's protector, Jawaharlal Nehru.

If Indira Gandhi protected Bansi Lal unto the last it was not because she was unaware of his great deeds or because she believed that he was an innocent lamb being pilloried by a savage opposition. Over the years at least three long, documented charge-sheets had been submitted to the union government against the man. Her own dossier on Bansi Lal, prepared by her very own espionage agency, euphemistically called the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), was spilling over with the black deeds of her favourite satrap. She knew, perhaps better than anybody else, his shady antecedents and his shadier present. She knew very well how he had kidnapped, jailed, and bribed legislators to keep the facade of a democratic majority in the state; she knew how Bansi Lal and his men had fleeced and tortured the people of Haryana; she knew of all the vulgar atrocities perpetrated by Surinder Singh and his goon squad; she knew of the Rewasa outrage in all its gruesome details.

She knew all this and more, and yet she could not act. Not because it was in her character to stand by her supporters through fire and brimstone. Far from it. She could ditch her closest of mates at the first sign of danger to herself. She protected Bansi Lal, not even because he was of immense use to her; the 30 years of benign Congress rule, benign most of all to underworld characters who passed as politicians and leaders, had brought to the surface many a scum who could be used by her as effectively as she used Bansi Lal. Lalit Narayan Mishra, may his soul rest in peace, had once been of great use to Indira Gandhi, but was she any the poorer with him gone?

None of these reasons was strong enough for Indira Gandhi to protect Bansi Lal the way she did. She protected him because she had no choice. In the ultimate analysis it was easier for Bansi Lal to ditch Indira Gandhi; he had no reputation to lose. The world would not have cared if a wayward son of some "unreliable" Jat called Mohar Singh ended up where he belonged. But could the world say the same about Nehru's only child, the woman who was so recently deified as Durga?

What if Bansi Lal chose to throw up the tapes of his tete-a-tete on phone with the famous mother and the son? What if the man, who had so little to lose, chose to make public the tell-tale pictures of the prince at the famous Pinjore Garden which he had kept so well-equipped at all times for the honoured guest? No, the man had to be shielded and protected. It was better to hang together than hang separately.

Bansi Lal knew his strength. He even boasted about it in his own crude way: "I have taken possession of the Calf and naturally the Cow is always at my beck and call. . . ."

"Fiqar na karo, bettaji. Zameen ki kya chinta hai?" (Don't you worry, son. Why do you bother about land?), he had told Sanjay Gandhi when the boy was looking around for land to set up his factory. Bansi Lal not only got him the land for a song, but a good part of the cement and iron and other building materials. He also got his pal, Vidya Charan Shukla, who was then Minister for Defence Production, to overrule objections that the land was too close to an Air Force depot.

When Sanjay failed to manufacture cars and the factory faced closure, Bansi Lal ordered the Haryana State Transport Corporation to give all the contracts for building bus bodies to Maruti Ltd. If Sanjay Gandhi needed anything, he had just to dial Bansi Lal. Like Aladin's djinn he was quick with whatever the prince desired.

An inhuman mixture of cruelty and subservience, Bansi Lal wormed his way through the boy into the innermost ring of power. "After Indira Gandhi it will be none other than you, my son," he never tired of telling Sanjay Gandhi.

When the political challenge to Indira Gandhi's supremacy mounted, Bansi Lal told Indira Gandhi: "Pack them in the jails. There are plenty in my Haryana. You have just to order. I can fix them all in a day." He was Indira Gandhi's Idi Amin Dada.

For him, 12 June 1975 was a godsend. He was in his element, bubbling with a sense of *deja vu.* "We should have taught them (the opposition leaders) a lesson long back," he told one of his close associates that evening. "Never let serpents raise their heads. Crush them at the first opportunity."

As the Chosen One of the "heir apparent" Bansi Lal was too far away from the court. He had to be brought close, and the post where he could be of greatest use to Sanjay Gandhi was of

Defence Minister. About that time the Army had been pressing for heavy duty vehicles of over 20 tonne capacity and several international firms were keen to enter into a collaboration with an Indian company. The Vice-President of a West German firm had visited the Maruti factory and had almost entered into an agreement under which they would have transferred their plant from West Germany to Maruti on a turnkey basis.

The deal was almost through, but there was one big hurdle: the Defence Minister. With Bansi Lal there, everything would go smoothly, thought the Young Master. And so on 1 December 1975, the man from Gola Garh was sworn in as the Defence Minister. Of course, he did not have to lose control over Haryana; he planted one of his puppets there.

When asked about the smooth transition in Haryana, Bansi Lal told a press conference at the Lucknow Raj Bhawan in January 1976: "He (B. D. Gupta) was my trusted chela. I put him there and came here, that's all. . . . I am just a chaprasi of Indira Gandhi. If she likes she can put me in a car or if she wants she can drop me on the road. . . ."

It was a very exclusive "press conference" arranged by one of Bansi Lal's former *chamchas* who had been a correspondent in Haryana. Just five selected newsmen to gather all the gems falling from the great Defence Minister's mouth. Of course, none of the gems could get into print; the newspapers had all been brought down to the "gutter-level."

The first impression that the man gave when he walked into the room was that of an unshaped boat launched into water in great hurry: crude and awkward. Someone started with a question on defence preparedness and he blustered: "Defence? We can crush our enemies into rubble. . . ."

But obviously he had not gone to Lucknow to talk about defence. He quickly came to the point: "Narayan Dutt Tewari will remain Chief Minister for at least five years. . . . You write it. Who is from the radio?. . . . You? Have it broadcast on the radio. . . . What? Why can't it be done? This is the Defence Minister ordering you. I'll talk to your Director General. . . . Well, this is what I have come to tell you all. Nobody can remove Narayan Dutt Tewari for at least five years. Do you understand?"

About the same time, his Young Master had given a similar certificate to his great crony in Bihar, Jagannath Mishra, the younger brother of Lalit Narayan Mishra. "Jagannath Mishra will remain the Chief Minister for ten to fifteen years" had been the prince's blessing.

But to return to the *Raksha Mantri's* gems:

> I don't approve of journalists. Once I gave a hard slap to what's-his-name. . . . calls himself a special correspondent. Special, my foot. My security man told me I had done just the right thing. He wanted to know if I had done his work. Was I the Chief Minister or a servant? What was the work? There was a woman in Chandigarh, some deputy director of something. Nonsense. Both this man and another chap from the *Tribune* used to fuck this woman. They went and wrote an editorial against me. I told the *thana* (police station) not to let the newspaper pass that way. Just burn them I ordered. This is what you get when you pick enmity with Chief Minister . . This journalist had been a friend of mine at one time. I had done many things for him. So many orders on files. Do you know what I did? Just went to Chandigarh and passed just the opposite orders on all the files. . . .

Behind him all the time stood a poker-faced S. K. Misra. Never a smile on his face, never any reaction.

One reporter hazarded the question: "Sir, it is said you are very close to Sanjay Gandhi and with him you are shaping the destiny of the nation. . . ."

"Dekkho," replied the Defence Minister in his uncouth Haryanvi, *"ab second line of leadership honi chahiye, isko lok samajhte nahi. . . . kya bura hai? Maine Bahenji (Indira Gandhi) se bhi kaha bakne dijiye logon ko . . . mere larke ke khilaf bhi bakte hain log . . . mere khilaf JP bhi ghoom ke dekh liya . . . janta ne jo usko batai puchcho mat . . . jail me band kar diya ek patta bhi nahi kharka . . . ab dekkho maine aur Sanjay dono ne Bahenji se kaha . . ."* (Look, there must be a second line of leadership, but people don't understand this . . . what's wrong with it? I even told Bahenji (Indira Gandhi) not to care for the barking dogs . . . people shout against my son too . . . JP too went around against me and understood it . . . don't ask me how the people treated him . . . threw him into the jail and not a leaf stirred . . . . Now look, both Sanjay and I

told Bahenji. . .)

He was about to go on, perhaps reveal something vital, but just at this point S. K. Misra moved up to him, whispered something in his ear and in a huff the press conference broke up. Bansi Lal suddenly got up and left, followed by his alter ego, Misra, whom he had brought to Delhi as "Joint Secretary to the *Raksha Mantri*"!

It was a very special kind of relationship, between Bansi Lal and his favourite officials. Bansi Lal would often go to the house of one of his favourites and the first thing he would do is to swap abuses with the officer's little son.

"You bastard," Bansi Lal would shout to the little boy. "Trying to behave like an IAS officer's brat?"

And the little boy would retort: "You son of a gun, trying to be the Defence Minister?"

An Army General who had one day accompanied the Defence Minister felt so embarrassed at the exchange of abuses between the 50-year-old man and the little boy that he withdrew. In rushed the officer's wife and drove the boy away.

"Let the boy learn this language," Bansi Lal told her. "It will make him bold and adventureous."

"That's not my way of bringing up my children," she retorted, much to the annoyance of her husband.

Bansi Lal and Misra were inseparable. Both had their families. Much before Bansi Lal became a great *nasbandi* crusader he had produced two sons and four daughters, all *shahzadas* and *shahzadis* of Haryana. But in a way neither Bansi Lal nor Misra was held by any strong family ties. Bansi Lal had got a Congress ticket for Misra's wife and she had got elected to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly (the previous one). She spent most of her time in Lucknow, while her husband took care of Bansi Lal's "conscience."

With them they brought a "new wave" to the Defence Ministry corridors in South Block. Army officers looked aghast as pot-bellied businessmen swinging their VIP briefcases ambled in and out of the offices of the Defence Minister and his "very personal Joint Secretary." A big Godrej safe, never seen there before, had materialized in the Defence Minister's room, much to the dismay and curiosity of the uniformed personnel.

What shocked them most was the Defence Minister's crude and overbearing manners. Whether he was dealing with a jawan or a non-commissioned officer or with the Chief of Staff, he went about as though they were all his serfs.

At an official lunch at the Ashoka Hotel in honour of the Czechoslovak Defence Minister who was visiting India, Bansi Lal looked at the group of officers standing around him and said: "Here you are, the Chiefs of the Navy and the Air Force. But where is the Army Chief? Somebody go find him."

The Air Marshal rushed to the other end of the banquet hall where Gen. Raina was talking to a foreign dignitary.

When the Chief of Army Staff came in sight, Bansi Lal said loudly, "Ah, Raina Saheb, where do you keep yourself in hiding all the time?" His sarcastic tone was not lost on the people around who had turned to see what was happening.

The General greeted the Minister very correctly, but Bansi Lal carried on in his own bumptious way: "Whenever I ask for you, they say you are out on tour. Come and see me in the office tomorrow." The tone was both rude and crude.

He was not the only bull in a china shop. His favourites, too, threw their weight around. One day, R. C. Mehtani ordered for tea from the army canteen in the South Block. When the tea came, he did not like the look of the crockery and burst out: "Is this the way to bring tea?" The bearer said he better talk to the Manager, who happened to be an honorary Lt.-Col. "Call him, I will fix him," shouted Mehtani.

When he talked to the Manager in the same vein, the Army man gave it back to him. "I'll see that you are dismissed," Mehtani threatened.

That very day the Defence Minister sent a note to the Army Chief asking him to dismiss the Manager. The Army Chief wrote back that there was no provision for such dismissals. Bansi Lal sent the file to the Prime Minister and Sanjay Gandhi intervened on Mehtani's behalf. Eventually, the Lt.-Col. was posted out of Delhi. A minor incident, but it had fouled the atmosphere in South Block.

Bansi Lal was up to more serious deals. He sent off a senior Air Force officer to Sweden twice in quick succession to finalize a Rs.300-crore deal for the purchase of fighter bomber aircrafts which were known to be full of defects. Misra, too, had been sent abroad in connection

with the deal, in which Sanjay Gandhi's pay-off was allegedly going to be 10 per cent of the total cost! The Lok Sabha elections ruined it all.

In totality, it was an ugly face, ugly on the outside, uglier within. But it would be futile to single him out for condemnation and forget the putrid soil that gave birth to such a man. Bansi Lal was not just a political freak, he was in a sense just a well-marked example of a type that could be met throughout society. If a vulgar man could get to a position where he could put his idiocies into practice, the people at large can hardly escape at least part of the responsibility. For the truth is that a people must first be in a condition to be led astray before it can abandon itself to such crudities as Bansi Lal or V. C. Shukla.

Dhirendra Brahmachari: Indira's Rasputin

HE WAS the "Open Sesame" to Indira's court.

He was the surest passport to No. 1 Safdarjang Road, for saints and mendicants down to crooks and smugglers.

No metal-detector ever bothered his white Toyota, no clock ever bound his visits, no rule ever limited his powers. He was the Indian Tsarina's Rasputin, the ruling mafia's guru.

A bull of a man, oozing vigour, draped in spotless white muslin, as white as the two hairy Pomeranians frolicking around him. Come summer, come winter, that is the man's only attire, a shimmering veil for his "body beautiful." A mane of raven-black hair receding at the crown, a sinewy hand playing with smoothly combed beard. Eyes sharp and crafty.

Dhirendra Brahmachari, 50, has quite a physical presence, but one can see at first glance that he is neither a mystic nor a sadhu, much less a *brahmachari* (celibate). If anything, he has the look of a *bhogi* with much indulgences to his credit.

The first person one runs into at his sprawling yoga ashram in New Delhi is a dark young man with a distorted face, looking tremulous. He, too, is waiting for Dhirendra Brahmachari who is supposedly at his *puja*, somewhere inside his airconditioned apartment. A man comes along with a year-old bonny baby and leaves it to play amidst the tables and chairs. "Whose baby is that?" asks a prying visitor. The man seems to weigh the question before replying: "*Ashram ka bachcha hai*" (it's the ashram's baby). The visitor is puzzled, but keeps mum. Some minutes later enters a slim Punjabi girl, about 20, looking agitated. "When can I see Swamiji?" she asks the man with the baby. He looks away as though he hasn't heard her. When she presses the question again, he says: "I don't know. You can try when he is by himself in the afternoon. Go straight in, that's the only way."

Enters the beaming Swami, his Pomeranians behind him. His eyes settle on the young girl in a hard stare and she slips out without a word.

"Ah Joe!" he addresses the man with the distorted face. "Why do you look so worried? I have engaged the best criminal lawyer of the city to fight the case. Don't be upset, my boy."

So, this was Joe Menzes, the co-accused of Dhirendra Brahmachari in a case of bigamy and seduction filed by the husband of Kusum Ahuja, the ashram's *prima donna!* In his statement in the Metropolitan Magistrate's court, the husband, V. V. Ahuja, had described in lurid details the "compromising situations" in which he had allegedly seen his wife and the Brahmachari.

"Don't you worry," the Brahmachari goes on. "This is only the beginning of our troubles. We'll fight them all."

When the Swami suddenly realizes there is a journalist around, his broad forehead gets furrowed and he sits up in his swivel chair.

"I am not giving any more interviews. I tell them one thing and they print another! They had been taught a good lesson. That's what they deserved."

One tries a different tab. One speaks to him

in Maithili, his mother-tongue, and asks him about his village in Bihar. His eyes get screwed at the question and his face hardens.

He replies in Hindustani. His tone is the same as of Sanjay Gandhi, rough and brusque.

"I have no home, no village."

But surely he must have come from somewhere, must have had a name before?

Perhaps very few know his antecedents better than Hari Bhakt Chaitanya, a disciple of Maharishi Kartikeya, a yogi who lived in the Himalayas and is said to have died at the age of 350 in 1953. Hari Bhakt, who now runs his own ashram in the rocky backwoods beyond Ramakrishna Puram in South Delhi, claims to have taught yoga to Dhirendra.

"He was not a *chela* of Kartikeya as he later claimed," says Hari Bhakt Chaitanya. "He only cooked food for Kartikeya. He was a wayward boy who had run away from his village, Chainpura in Darbhanga district, when he was only 13 years old. As far as I remember his name was Dhir Chandra Chaudhary and said he was a Maithil Brahmin. We began calling him Dhirendra. . . .

"After the Maharishi had passed away, I started teaching yoga at Jammu. It was there that Dhirendra came and began requesting me to teach him, too. He had worked for my guru and I began treating him like my guru-bhai. I taught him yoga but he could never go beyond the physical side of it. That's all he was interested in—the contortions."[1]

In the mid-fifties, Hari Bhakt and Dhirendra went to Calcutta where they began taking yoga classes in the *maidan*. Some years later they moved to Delhi and started a Vishwayatan Yogasan Kendra in Daryaganj. By then the two had gathered quite an album of certificates from eminent people recommending them as "excellent teachers of yoga—the miraculous cure for all diseases." The younger of the two, Dhirendra, had proved himself quite clever in worldly ways even in those days, and with his handsome physique he had become quite a success with female disciples, of whom they had quite a few right from the beginning.

In Delhi, the two were inevitably drawn to the great Sadhu Samaj man, Gulzarilal Nanda, who in turn recommended them strongly to Jawaharlal Nehru. "In those days," recalls Hari Bhakt, "Jawaharlalji was suffering from some ailments and was keen to try yogic exercises. Both of us started going to Teen Murti House regularly. That was around 1958. We had first met Panditji and Indira when they had gone to Pahelgam on a holiday."

The association with Nehru marked the beginning of Dhirendra Brahmachari's rise. In 1959, the two of them organized a big yogic demonstration in a Delhi stadium to mark the establishment of the Vishwayatan Yoga Ashram. This was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru and attended by many eminent leaders, including Jayaprakash Narayan, who had earlier undergone a 20-day course under the two swamis and written a foreword to Dhirendra's book (ghost-written by a yoga enthusiast).

"Right there at the function," says Hari Bhakt, "the Minister of Education and Health promised to sanction government aid for the ashram." Soon the ashram was given an annual grant of Rs.20,000 by the Education Ministry. Besides, they wangled a bungalow on the Jantar Mantar Road for the ashram, in spite of objections made by senior officers of the Housing Ministry. Somehow their objection notes "vanished" from the file and the house was allotted directly under orders from the Housing Minister.

Jawaharlal Nehru was not the only one to fall for the swamis. There was virtually a line-up of VIPs wanting to take lessons from them. "We taught Morarji Desai for a month when he was the Finance Minister, we taught Dr Rajendra Prasad and Jagjivan Ram and so many other ministers and high officials."

After Nehru had done the exercises for some days, Indira Gandhi also indicated her desire to learn. "She had been watching the courses with great fascination. Soon Dhirendra began teaching her."

Within a few months, Hari Bhakt found that he was no longer very welcome in Teen Murti House. Dhirendra Brahmachari was the one who was in great demand there. "He had also started all sorts of bunglings in the ashram accounts. He would make false vouchers and bills and when I objected, he told me to mind my own business. Soon he started opposing me in everything, and one day he said if I didn't want to 'co-operate' with him, I could leave. I didn't have the stomach for the sort of things he was doing. I left and went away to Jammu."

[1] In an interview with the author.

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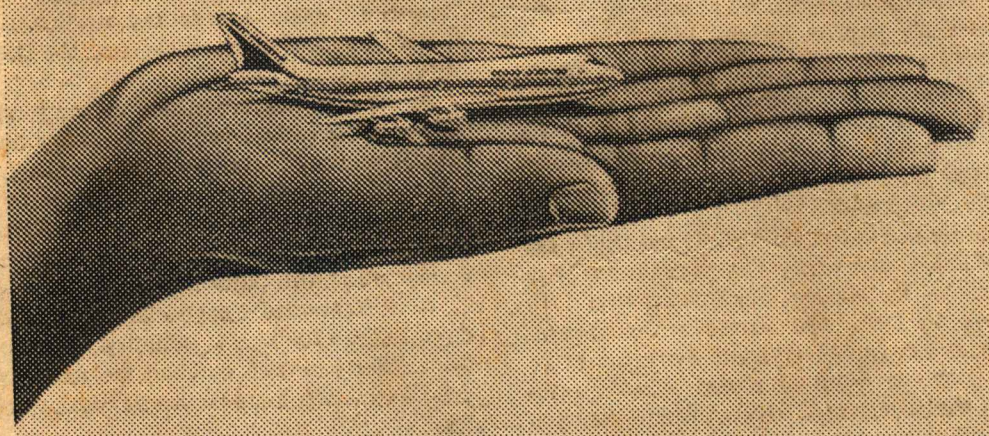

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But before he left he had seen some of the goings-on at Teen Murti House. "I had been shocked by the way Dhirendra was behaving there. I feared the worst. And not only me. There were others who had begun talking about him in a derogatory way."

Hari Bhakt claims that from Jammu he wrote a letter to Indira Gandhi telling her that Dhirendra's association with Teen Murti House was creating a foul atmosphere and she ought to be careful. "I also wrote that she should show the letter to the Prime Minister. I don't know if she did that, but once when I visited Delhi I met Jawaharlalji and complained to him about Dhirendra. But he was not willing to listen to anything against the man."

Incensed as he was against Dhirendra's "treachery," Hari Bhakt approached Morarji Desai, the then Finance Minister, and got the annual grant to the ashram stopped. "When Dhirendra learnt about it, he ran to Indira Gandhi and sought her help. She at once rang up Morarji Desai and requested that the grant should be resumed. She said she was willing to stand guarantee for the amount and it would be her responsibility if anything went wrong. And so he started getting the money again."

With Hari Bhakt cleared from the way, Dhirendra Brahmachari started managing the ashram in his own way. He even used Teen Murti House as a platform to propagate himself. He would sit around the house for hours every day, seeking financial help for his ashram from people who went to visit Nehru. He had found quite a place to collect money and publicize himself.

Nehru's death came as a set-back to the Brahmachari. Though he counted Lal Bahadur Shastri, too, among his "disciples" the little man was made of a different stuff. He was not the one to be fobbed by Tejas and Brahmacharis. The Education Ministry started an inquiry into the alleged mishandling of funds by the Brahmachari and he was evicted from the bungalow on the Jantar Mantar Road. For two days all his luggage lay piled up on the roadside. He then moved his ashram to a house he rented in Defence Colony for Rs 800 per month. The promised grant of several lakhs for a training camp at Katra in Jammu and Kashmir was also cancelled.

With the "Return of the Red Rose" in 1966, the Brahmachari's stars rose again. He staged a come-back with a bang. Not only was he reimbursed all the money (about Rs 29,000) he had paid as rent for the Defence Colony house, but was also given 1.8 acres of land in a prestigious residential area of New Delhi at a throw-away price. While the market price in 1968-69 was Rs 1,000 per sq. yard, it had been sold to him for less than Rs 10 per sq. yard.

The Brahmachari's interest in politics was first seen during the general elections of 1967. He camped for nearly a month in Rae Bareli and went round the villages, perhaps to impress the poor folks that even "holy swamis" were behind the "Bahu of Rae Bareli." But the Brahmachari had still not quite arrived then, not yet the mod jet-set yogi that he was soon to turn into. There was still something of Kartikeya's cook left in him. A Delhi journalist, who also spent a month in Rae Bareli, recalls how the Brahmachari would often cook food for him and Yashpal Kapoor.

That time spent with Kapoor did not go a waste. Apart from learning some useful lessons for his future operations, Dhirendra Brahmachari had established a better rapport with Kapoor who was to be of immense help to him. To begin with, their relations had been somewhat strained; they had been suspicious and even a little jealous of each other. But gradually a tacit understanding had developed between them; they had agreed to live and let live, in fact to be of as much use to each other as they could. If there was one person both had disliked and detested it was Feroze Gandhi, but he was dead long ago. Then for some years there was Dinesh Singh and, again, both Kapoor and Dhirendra Brahmachari had loathed the man. In their own ways both had worked to discredit and malign the arrogant Raja and had succeeded in eventually getting him out of the way.

There was another initial hurdle in the Swami's way: Sanjay Gandhi. After his return from England, the boy had had several fights with his mother over men in her court whom he detested, but eventually they, too, had decided to live and let live. And gradually the boy found that the Swami was after all not really worthless. He was quite mod in his own way, loved the good things of life, had a bevy of beauties around him, had imported cars and in due course he was to acquire a flying beauty—a three-seater "Maulle" aircraft which had come as a gift from its American makers who were quite sold on this jet-set Swami who claimed he could initiate them into the secrets of a long and healthy life.

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"Oh boy, what a Swami!" the two boys, Rajiv and Sanjay are said to have exclaimed when they learnt about his new acquisition. No wonder it was brought into the country without any import duty. Soon the Swami and Sanjay and Maneka were all learning to fly the plane. What great thrill! The Swami's airconditioned nook in the ashram became one of the favourite haunts of the rising son of India.

Dhirendra Brahmachari had much to offer the boy; their tastes were remarkably similar. Whenever they got bored with it all and wanted to "change the scene" as the hippies say, they would fly off to the Swami's new retreat in Jammu and Kashmir.

Perched on a mountain ledge overlooking the beautiful Tawi river winding its way like a silver snake, the Tower Palace at Mantalai was an out-of-the world pleasure-dome. "Aparna Ashram," as Dhirendra Brahmachari had named it, was supposedly going to become the last word in yoga research. That was the Swami's projected plan, as far as the public was concerned. But in reality it had already turned into the last word in "flesh comfort." This mythical honeymoon abode of Lord Shiva and Uma turned into a rendezvous of present-day pleasure-seekers. The building was sound-proof, lavishly done-up with imported furnishings, equipped with sauna baths and underground "meditation cells," all sound-proof and airconditioned. The place, teeming with electric gadgets, had a "hot line" with Delhi and atop the tower was a siren! Heavily financed by the Education Ministry, the Swami's marble dreamland had cost over Rs 15 lakhs.

In deference to Indira's Rasputin, the Defence Ministry, under special orders from Bansi Lal, opened its nearby airfield for "unrestricted use" by the Swami's planes. The airstrip was a special gift to him from Bansi Lal—constructed to facilitate the VIP fliers. Indian Air Force helicopters often carried the Swami and his VIP guests to the ashram. His own "Maulle" aircraft would ferry his rich foreign disciples to Mantalai for an exotic experience. These foreigners could easily build a replica of the place in their own lands, but where would they find a "vibrant human dynamo" like their Indian host?

For those who did not have the time to go to Mantalai, the Swami had built a 16-room air-conditioned retreat right in New Delhi. Called the "Yoga International House," it had turned into a veritable "vice den" for the Swami's exclusive clientele.

The Swami's association with Indira Gandhi brought him rich dividends. During 1969-70, his ashram got a government grant of Rs.30,000. In 1970-71, it shot up to Rs 1,89,875. After the great victory in the elections of 1971, the grant increased to Rs.3,42,727. According to the last figures given by the Janata Party government in June 1977, Dhirendra Brahmachari had received government grants of Rs 43 lakhs since 1967.

But this perhaps was nothing as compared to the gains in other ways. As soon as it got around that he wielded great power in Indira's court, all sorts of people began flocking to him. Politicians, businessmen, industrialists, smugglers, anybody who wanted anything to get done at the highest level went straight to the Brahmachari or Yashpal Kapoor or R. K. Dhawan or Sanjay Gandhi—the gems of Indira's court. "Whether it was licence or libido," commented a Delhi journal,[2] "contracts or cabinet changes everything seemed to be solved by a single 'blessing' from the yogi. The young penury-stricken yogi of Calcutta had become a millionaire. With two palatial ashrams in Delhi, a 100 per cent grant from ministries, cars and executive planes and a bevy of beautiful girls, he had given to himself all that yoga can give and more."

This jet-set yogi who spent hours every day teaching the intricacies of yoga to the "most powerful woman of the world" had his own style of divining and diagnosing the ailments of his "patients." Khuswant Singh of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* must have taken a salacious delight in putting it all down. He described it lovingly:

> He (Dhirendra Brahmachari) makes the patient lie on his or her back. He takes a string, places one end on the navel and measures the distance between the navel and the right and the left nipple. "Since ladies' breasts vary in shape and size and some droop, instead of navel-nipple distance I measure the distance between the navel and the left and the right toe. . . . The navel is the centre of the 72,000 nerves in the human body. . . . The navel is like the pulse. When I feel the navel, I can tell blind-folded what is wrong with the person."

This navel-divining Brahmachari was sent by

[2] *India Today*, 16-30 June 1977.

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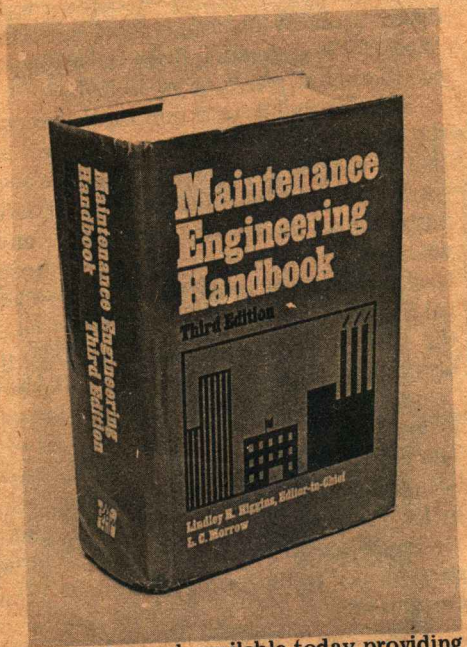

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the Government of India to the Osaka Expo in 1972. He took with him his beautiful ashram girl, Manju, a matriculate whom he had appointed a research officer on a salary of Rs.1,000 per month. They brought back with them, as "gifts" for their great feats, a Toyota and a moveable swimming pool and bagsful of electronic gadgets–all free of custom duty.

From his great chum, Bansi Lal, the Brahmachari got a beautiful black cow which he is said to have fed with 60 kilograms of apples every day. The Jat bully had allegedly got the cow from a Jagadhri businessman, without ever paying him any money. For his "black beauty" the Swami borrowed a special bull from the Delhi Administration, an imported Holstein Friesian breed worth Rs.10,000. When the Delhi Administration asked him to return the bull, the Brahmachari wrote: "As it was difficult for the bull to bear the heat of Delhi, it has been sent to Katra (J & K) last month. . . ."

A six-hour raid on the Brahmachari's pleasure retreat at Mantalai brought out a number of arms and ammunitions, including a revolver, a hunting rifle, and a telescopic rifle. Were these part of the equipment for yogic research or was the Brahmachari, like his other friend, V. C. Shukla, running a Shikar company?

Apart from being a well-greased pipeline between the underworld and the powers-that-be, the Swami was suspected to have played a key role in the dispersal of "big booty." According to some, he was the man who controlled the "war chest" on behalf of Indira and Sanjay.

Whether he did this for them or not, he was unquestionably privy to many a dark secret of the court, an integral part of the mafia that pushed the country to a ruinous course.

The Curtain

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU is quoted as having once told his daughter: "All of us are various mixtures of the good and the great and the little, and the quest for overmuch power is a dangerous one. Sooner or later downfall and ruin come to individuals or nations who seek it."[1]

In these two sentences lies the epitaph of the Indira era.

With all his failings, Nehru had a sense of history. He had seen great dictators, once hailed as infallible, being dumped into the dustbin of history. If he hadn't taken any lessons from them, if he did not have that strong streak of liberal humanism in him, he himself might well have turned into a tinpot dictator.

But Indira Gandhi had little to do with history. Nehru's famous letters to his daughter could not have been more wasted than they were on her. As she herself said, more with pride than humility, she was made of a "different stuff" than her father.

For several years after the rot in the party and the government had become oppressive, there were numerous people in the country who still anchored their hopes on Indira Gandhi. In the Congress itself, there were some good and clean people who felt suffocated by the sharp erosion of values all around–the corruption, the blatant horse-trading for power, the steady rise of political criminals. But these people kept on hoping that with Indira Gandhi at the top, the good and the clean would eventually come into their own. It was only the unscrupulous political operators who were spreading the poison, she herself was clean and would some day come down with a heavy hand on all the crooks around her. But time would pass by and men like Bansi Lal, Lalit Narayan Mishra, Yashpal Kapoor, and all the rest of them would just keep going up and up. Why isn't she doing something about them? They would wonder. And sometimes, when their hopes would start flagging, they would go to Indira Gandhi to speak their minds to her, to find out if she was aware of what was happening all around.

Most of them would come back satisfied that she herself was not to blame. She would listen to them, sometimes even make notes of what they told her, which made them think that she might act on their advice or suggestions. "No, her own political instincts are right, she

[1] *Marie Seton, Panditji–A Portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru.*

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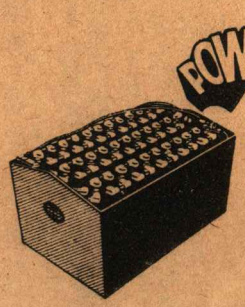

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has the good of the country at heart," they would come and tell their colleagues. "It's only the crooks who are doing all this, but wait and see, she will set things right." Even hard-boiled commentators and people supposed to have keen insight into men and matters were taken in by her show of sincerity and good sense.

Some people went on hoping even during the worst days of the Emergency. "It's only the boy who is the evil force there; she is different," they would often say in private, perhaps more to reassure themselves. Even now, many continue to believe in her "essential goodness" which is another proof of her remarkable capacity for simulation.

Jekyll and Hyde had only two faces, Indira Gandhi had many. All her men were her different masks which she wore as and when it suited her. It was the will of Indira Gandhi and later of the mother and the son which operated through the crude bunch of men.

Even a surface attempt, as this book, to unravel the psychologies of the people around Indira Gandhi and her son, lays bare virtually the whole range of human inadequacies and frailties. At best, these were small men. Not one of them had the qualities even of a mediocre politician. Bansi Lal, V. C. Shukla, Barooah, Om Mehta, Yunus, S. S. Ray, D. P. Chattopadhya, Pranab Mukherjee, not to speak of men like Yashpal and Dhawan, were all back-room boys whom the two used for their unbridled pursuit of power, devoid of all values. These were the men who rose to the country's top positions and debased them all. So much mediocrity, so much grossness and insignificance of character would have been hard to find even in the minor courts of the Italian Renaissance.

One of their dearest ones was a man who had been a disgrace even for the bus conductors of Hissar. They made him their Defence Minister. All the chicanery, corruption, and vulgarity of the now defunct court of Loharu Nawabs were carried over by this man to the court of the mother and the son. These were the qualities they prized most. It mattered nothing to Indira Gandhi if her *Raksha Mantri* was as vulgar and crude with Army Generals as he had been with the bus conductors of Bhiwani or Loharu.

Having established his Nawabdom in Haryana with the blessings of the ruling deity of India, Bansi Lal had taken over from his friend, Lalit Narayan Mishra, the task of promoting the heir apparent. That was the sure road to success that he had chosen. Right from the job of finding land for the boy's car factory down to the supply of bricks and cement and steel, Bansi Lal took everything upon himself. He was the one to goad the mother and the son to pack all the trouble-makers in jail and seize absolute power. "Power never comes on a platter, you have to grab it," he always told Sanjay Gandhi.

When he was brought in as the Defence Minister, he allegedly smoothed the way for huge defence contracts to Maruti Ltd. in collaboration with multinationals; if only the March elections hadn't spoilt it all, the giant machines would have arrived at the factory. He spun around politicking in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana in Indian Air Force helicopters as though they were his personal property. He did not consider the Indian Air Force planes comfortable enough for himself and his masters and so he was about to go in for a luxury Boeing, which would also have given his Young Master quite a tidy sum on the side. One of his last orders as the Defence Minister was for 500 pistols from ordnance disposal for use during the elections by his goon squad in Haryana. He could not get them because a Deputy Secretary gave an adverse note which delayed the matter, and by the time Bansi Lal knew of it, he was out. If he had come back victorious, that would have been the end of the "foolhardy" officer.

All the deeds of this man were known to Indira Gandhi. But if he had done five dirty jobs for himself, he had done two for her. She had no face to haul him up, even if she had wanted to.

Vastly different were the background and antecedents of Indira's Goebbels. Even if he hadn't come into politics, he would still have been a playboy, thanks to the wealth his father had left him. Shukla loved fast driving and fast living and operated somewhat on the scale of a Harold Robbins character, flitting from hotel to hotel, affair to affair, talking big, living big.

There was not much inside him. He was just a swashbuckler, which was considered the greatest recommendation for the job he was assigned. He could be rough and tough with editors and correspondents and that was what the court wanted, a man who could tighten the screws on the incorrigible chaps of the Press.

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when he entered Shastri Bhawan and knew nothing about them when he walked out of the building for the last time, 19 months later. He didn't have to know anything. The less he knew the better he could screw the media. He set for himself three tasks: to brighten and magnify the personalities of Indira Gandhi and Sanjay, highlight the "gains" of the Emergency, and to banish any truth that came in the way of the first two. He went about the job in such a crude and hamhanded manner that he ended up by totally screwing up the credibility of the media—and of his masters.

Dev Kant Barooah, who had come in to give a "new lustre" to the Congress Party, only succeeded in pushing it further on the disaster course. With his fire-breathing statements, pleasing to his commie friends, he aggravated the crisis in the country and deepened the fissures in his own party. An ambitious man who had his eyes set on the highest job in the country, he bided his time playing the court jester. But this simulated character ran away with him at times and he became a buffoon pure and simple. In his sycophancy towards the mother and the son, he showed himself to be an even greater nincompoop than his predecessor. At the Youth Congress session in Delhi in August 1976, Barooah told the Sanjay hoodlums: "Break open the doors of the Congress and occupy the chairs. . . ." Said the headlines in a widely circulated journal: "Congress is Dead. Long live the Youth Congress." If it was not dead, it had certainly abdicated.

After the great Congress debacle, he talked volubly to his friends about the "Borstal character" of the boy, but he could hardly explain his own actions. When Sanjay Gandhi sent in his resignation from the AICC membership, Barooah promptly sent his acceptance, saying, "I appreciate this thoughtful action of yours in view of your wish to retire from political life." But who had made Sanjay Gandhi a member of the AICC when he was not even a primary member of the Congress? When the question of action against Sanjay Gandhi was raised in the Congress Working Committee later, that faithful lady khidmatgar of Indira Gandhi, Purabi Mukherjee, said blandly that the question did not arise because Sanjay Gandhi was not even a primary member of the party! What a Bumbledom Indira Gandhi had created around her!

There was her dear "Omji"—the dumb-faced Kashmiri who took his orders every hour of the day and night from Sanjay Gandhi and R. K. Dhawan, mostly from the latter. This loose-limbed man from Kistwar sometimes gave the appearance of being such an innocent man that you wouldn't think he could kill a fly. It was certainly hard to believe that this man could become the instrument of widespread barbarity in the country. "But I had nothing to do with law and order," he mumbled in the aftermath of the debacle. He knew nothing at all! And yet when a day before resigning from the Congress, Jagjivan Ram asked Indira Gandhi that she should withdraw the Emergency, she said she was referring the matter to "Omji." Because Om Mehta was her "mask" for doing all the dirty jobs of the Emergency.

And then her blustering Special Envoy who behaved more like a police officer of some tyrannical medieval court. Such gems flowed from him every time he had a group of pressmen around him! At the Madras Press Club, talking about the Emergency and the political prisoners, Yunus gave some glimpses into the very special working of the Special Envoy's mind: "I talked to the Shah of Iran recently about what he did with prisoners, and the reply was, 'We do not have prisoners. We just shoot them.' It is just these three, four countries (of the West) that are disease-minded and refuse to see anything good in our country. To hell with them!. . . . What about the British, wretched fellows, who hate Indians after we have worked for them?. . . The lunatic British cannot forget the 400-year-old story of Tipu Sultan or the Black Hole incident. They have not forgiven it. . . ." Then perhaps Yunus suddenly remembered his communist-baiting Young Master, and added: "I don't read the Russian papers and I don't know what the hell is going on in the communist countries!" Probably what he wanted to emphasize was that like Sanjay Gandhi he was neither left nor right!

And then there was her "good boy" from West Bengal, Pranab. Quite early during the Emergency, when the government was about to launch its operations against tax-evaders, Indira Gandhi called the young bespectacled minister for a briefing. Always brief, Indira Gandhi is said to have told him the broad strategy for dealing with the tax-evaders. They belonged to three categories, these evaders. Those of the first category were "friends" and the approach towards them was to "settle it" on a mutual basis. Rajni

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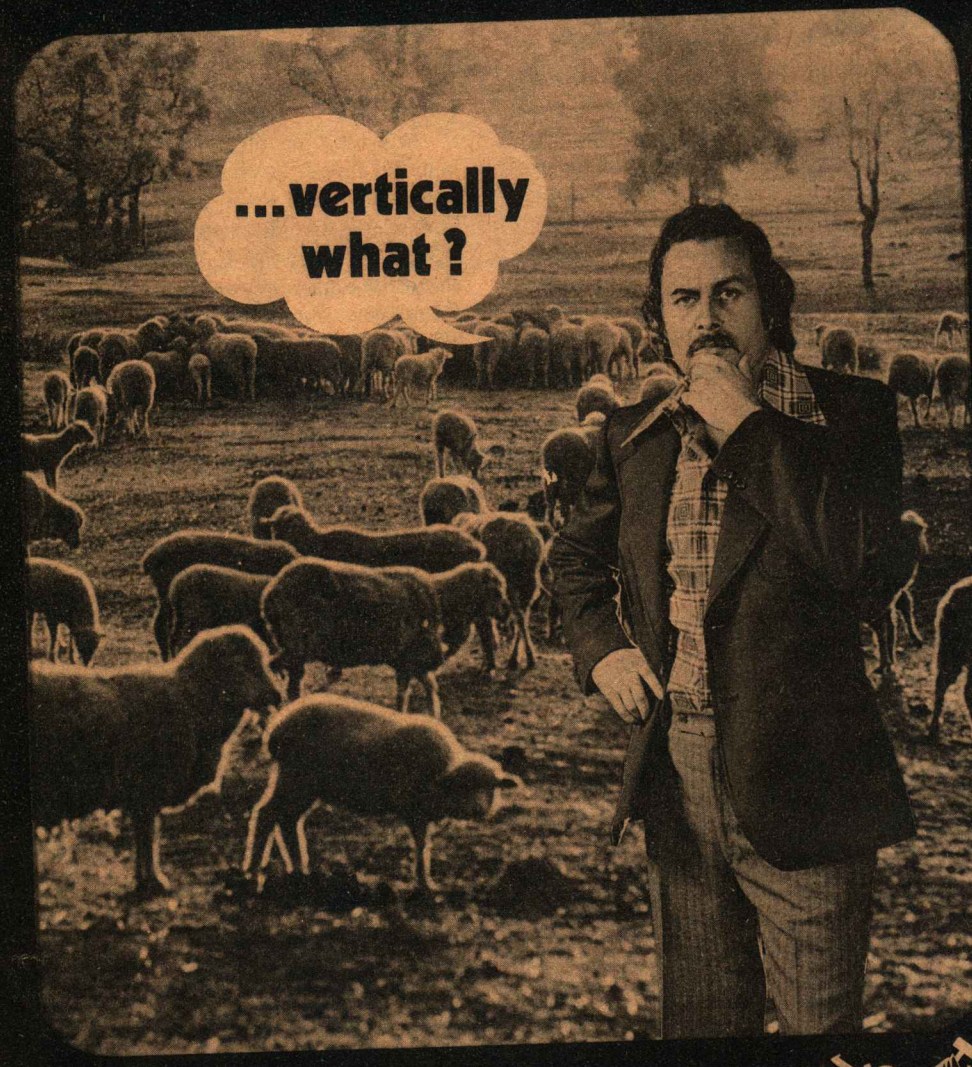

From sheep to suitings-only Raymond's

Patel was still the leading fund collector of the party in those days, and so he was the man who would "know the friends." The second category comprised the "enemies." They had to be dealt with in the most ruthless manner and made to cough up the heaviest possible fines. The third category was of "rich people." All that had to be done was to put the screw on them. Again, Rajni Patel would know the men who belonged to this category. Put the screw, and leave it to Rajni Patel to collect. Poor Mukherjee, a lecturer in some god-forsaken college until only some years ago, could never have imagined he would one day sit through such an enlightening discourse ! He was simply overawed by the aura that he had suddenly descended into. As the Banking and Revenue Minister he could sit back in his swivel chair chewing a pipe and exult over the "huge empire" that he commanded! At such moments, of course, one never thought of the little humiliations of taking one's orders from a bully who was a nobody. One could always reassure oneself with the fact that there was no difference between the young man and the Prime Minister. Some of these ministers felt honoured to be of use even to "Dhawan Saheb."

These were the men who suited the style and temperament of Indira Gandhi. She had had small men around her even earlier, but there also happened to be some professional men to counteract the scums of her court. One could perhaps describe P. N. Haksar as a Machiavelli of the office desk, but as long as he was there, he kept her image high.

Such was the aura that was built around her over the years that many wondered how she could even tolerate the low and mean operators around herself. One of the many possible explanations lay in her psychological make-up. Curiously enough, the steep decline in her personality appears to have coincided with what some psychologists describe as the "climacterium"—the period of a great biological trauma for some women. It's a dangerous age, they think. In *The Psychology of Women,* Helen Deutsch describes some of the things that may happen to women during the climacterium:

> Her rebellion against old age makes her forget all her experience. Even if she has previously displayed good judgement of people, she now surrounds herself with men whose level is far inferior to her own, in order to have the illusion of being admired and loved by many. . . . Like a pubescent girl she now brags about her personality. . . . She makes friends with dubious individuals, whom she now attracts as light attracts a moth. Her respectable acquaintances seem to her insignificant and boring. . . . The pull at the psychic umbilical cord and the yearning for the son grow more intense. Their judgement fails, and they readily fall victim to evil counsellors. . . .

One of her many faces was beautiful to behold. It charmed people. Artists from far and wide came to sketch and paint her. Film-makers waited for hours to capture one of her fleeting expressions they had seen somewhere, in real life or in some picture. It was a face that many foreign journalists loved to describe: her long, thin face and Roman features. "I am somehow reminded of a Hapsburg empress," wrote one correspondent who interviewed her during her father's time. "When I see her slender sari-draped figure sweeping through the carpeted halls of the Prime Minister's residence. . . . She enters the little sitting room so swiftly and noiselessly that I am always startled and slightly flustered. . . ."[2]

Even in those early days, when she had no position and yet "vast, amorphous, and indefinable" powers[3] (as her son was to have during her prime ministership), there was an imperious aura about Indira Gandhi, and inside her a strong streak of fascism, as her husband noted very early. She thought she had a divine right to rule, that there was something in her that was superior to all the others in the party. The others were all "pygmies" or "idiots." There was perhaps a little of this in all Nehrus, a feeling that they were the inheritors of the White Man's Burden. One of her close relatives, B. K. Nehru, High Commissioner in London, once explained to Bernard D. Nossiter, European Correspondent of the *Washington Post,* the Nehru family's view of those over whom they presided. "Nehru, then Governor of Assam, was having trouble with the Mizos. Sipping tea in the comfortable Governor's Palace, B. K. said: 'You can't run a government along Gandhian lines. I agree with Mao: power comes out of the end of a gun. There are times when you have to face things, kill and be killed. We came along, moralists that we are, and said we must administer these savages. . . .' "

[2] Welles Hangen, *After Nehru Who?*
[3] *Ibid.*

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Indira Gandhi showed very much the same attitude towards people who revolted against her. When a latter-day Gandhi marched out on the streets of Patna to raise a voice against her corrupt government, she sought to crush him and his movement with lathis and bullets. Indeed, the real process of liberation from the British had been held up by the Nehrus. If Jawaharlal was a nexus between the Hindu masses and the anglicized Hindu, as Nirad C. Chaudhuri said,[4] Indira Gandhi was the nexus between the Nehru culture and the Sanjay boorishness.

Indira Gandhi was no democrat, but she was all the time trying to project herself as one. As her chance remark to a foreign journalist had shown ("what do you want me to do? I'm surrounded by a bunch of idiots. And democracy. . . ."), she had little respect for democracy. None the less, she wanted to be extolled as a great democrat in the true Nehru tradition! A marked characteristic of her deeply splintered personality was her peculiar hang-up about her image in the Western press. She would not care less what others said about her, but a line of criticism in the British or the American press would throw her into hysterics. She was always lashing at the Western press, to the point that it became an obsession with her. What wouldn't she have given for a headline in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* calling her the only democratic ruler east of Suez! There were many other reasons why she decided to go for elections when she did, but to prove the West wrong was certainly one of the principal reasons.

She was arrogant about her power, but she was even more arrogant about the source of her power: the 600 million people of India! Even when she had lost all touch with the people, she thought she had her hand on their pulses. Nobody in the country knew the feelings of the people better than she did, she thought in her arrogance. She was convinced that it was only a handful of city-dwellers, deluded and misled by a worthless opposition, who were creating all the trouble. Her para-military forces were sufficient to take care of them. As for the vast teeming millions of the country, she thought they were all her worshippers. She had seen the big crowds at her public meetings, the rural folks looking up to her with awe and reverence. But when the look in their eyes turned into stony indifference, she did not even feel the change. By then she had become such a paranoid, the large crowds and her speeches had become so mechanical that the change just did not register on her. The form had become the reality; she did not even know the great effort that went into collecting crowds for her. The number of heads was all she bothered about.

Crowds had been a great obsession with Hitler too. It is calculated that in the course of his life, the Fuhrer spoke before nearly 35 million people and he had always considered his big crowds an "expression of true democracy." Indira Gandhi may have drawn even more people during her "great decade" but that by itself could make her only as democratic as Hitler was.

Behind all the populist rhetoric and the redeemer cult, systematically developed around the person of Indira Gandhi, there was the steady debasement of political values, a staggering increase in all-round corruption, and a callous misuse of power and authority. By 1974, corruption stories had started bursting like chain-crackers. But instead of showing a genuine willingness to curb corruption, there was only greater impatience with all criticism. As corruption was getting out of hand, so was her arrogance and woodenness. Soon, even a whisper against her, as V. C. Shukla was to warn his officers, would become a "treason" and any unfavourable references to people connected with her "unpatriotic." That was not Shukla speaking, it was just another voice of the mother and the son.

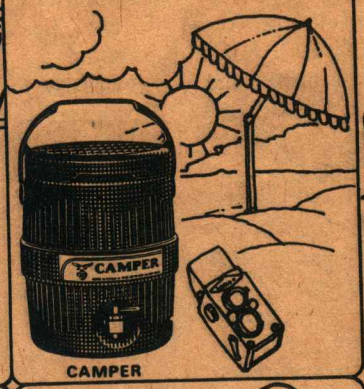
There was no difference between Indira Gandhi and Sanjay. They were like the two sides of the same coin, equal partners in everything. She could not trust anybody except her son, and perhaps not even him sometimes. She must have heard about the parent-son intrigues of the Mughal court. But certainly it was far better to make way for a son than for Barooah or Tripathi or Ray. She and her darling son were out to fight the battle together. "One thing he (Sanjay) inherits from me," she proclaimed, "is that when we are under attack, we fight back. . . . In fact, I think, he would never have come into politics if there had not been that tremendous attack on him in Parliament even before the Emergency, because basically he was not interested in any of these things. But when there was an attack, he did feel nobody was speaking up for him. This is what urged him to come out."

It was to enable her son to defend himself

[4] Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Continent of Circe.*

Browse

Picnic



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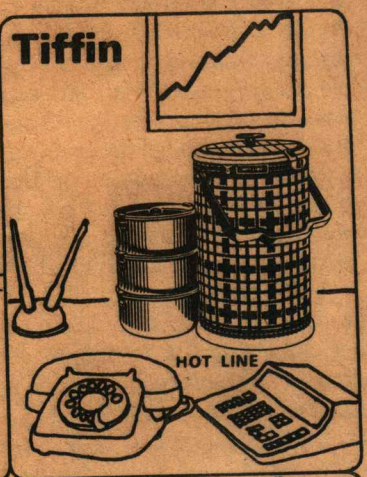

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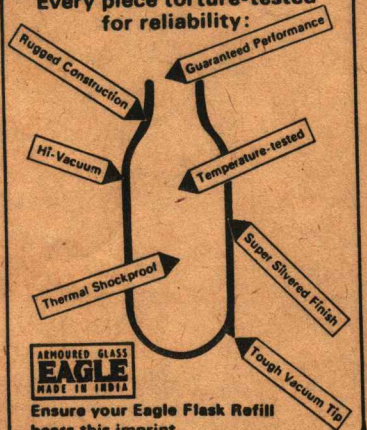

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against attacks that Indira Gandhi entrusted all her powers to him! And later to defend her! "When the Allahabad High Court judgment came, I did feel that I needed help, that there were not very many sincere people around. Therefore, he felt he should come and do what he could. . . ."

It was all done too crudely—the projection of Sanjay Gandhi—the brazen use of official machinery on his image-building trips round the country, the shameless sycophancy of Indira's satraps, and his open interference in the day-to-day affairs of the government and the Congress Party. It became the talking point all over the country. The brazenness of it all was making the whole operation counter-productive, but Indira Gandhi hardly had the sensitivity to perceive it. She herself was going all out to project her son, often asking her Ministers and Chief Ministers to "consult" Sanjay Gandhi on some point or the other. "That's a programme Sanjay is interested in, you better talk to him," she would say. Or if she herself didn't say it, there was always the great Sanjay-promoter, R. K. Dhawan, to drop the hint to the Union Ministers and Chief Ministers.

It was perhaps no fault of Indira Gandhi. It had happened to herself during her father's prime ministership. Her projection by Nehru had not been all that subtle as some people make it out to be. There is this account from the time when she was a nobody like her son:

> Something very special is on. At Palam airport, for once, the cops are keeping the thoroughfares clear. . . . As if from nowhere, by silent command, a sea of white caps packed the tiny lounge at Palam . . . the familiar faces of Cabinet Ministers, ordinary Ministers, deputies, fixers and hopefuls. Must be the Prime Minister summoned at short notice to Geneva. But it is not the Prime Minister acknowledging the greetings—it is his daughter, Indira Gandhi. Ah, of course, she is on her way to the USA on a lecture tour. And then everyone noticed it, she did not go through the formality of moving through the customs-shed. Indeed, she walked straight on to the tarmac, followed by at least two hundred (people) moving slowly towards the plane. In fact everyone could have joined the "barat." The incident is revealing for the light it throws on the crisis of character which grips the Congress party. All this is in honour of Indira Gandhi, the ordinary citizen, daughter of Prime Minister on the eve of cabinet making in the capital. But even more serious is the flouting of accepted restrictions and regulations by the rulers of the land who should be setting an example.[5]

But while Indira Gandhi had taken a long time abuilding, the son was in too great a hurry. During one of his trips to Uttar Pradesh, his great crony Narayan Dutt Tewari arranged a get-together with the intellectuals of Lucknow. In course of a short question-and-answer session, one of the invitees asked Sanjay Gandhi: "If you become the Prime Minister what will be your priorities?"

Pat came Sanjay Gandhi's reply: "At present there are no elections. When the elections come we will see about that."

The elections were meant primarily for Sanjay Gandhi: to legitimize his power and pack the Lok Sabha with men from his goon squad. Ambika Soni was not talking in the air when she claimed towards the end of January 1977 that the Youth Congress would get "at least 200 seats" for the Lok Sabha elections. That indeed was the plan. They had no idea at all of other people's plans, neither of Jagjivan Ram nor of the voters at large, who had for once made up their minds.

If anybody was to be thanked for the decision to hold elections it was Sanjay Gandhi—and his mindless cronies like Narayan Dutt Tewari. "Let the elections be held," he used to tell Sanjay Gandhi, "and you will see what a great victory we will have. Not less than 80 seats in UP, I assure you, Sanjayji." He used to point towards the surging crowds of hired people and say: "See, Sir, how the people have rushed for your *darshan.* They have come from far-off villages, Sir,"

His cronies from other states too were falling over one another to offer Sanjay Gandhi a "safe constituency." Long before there was any talk of elections, Jagannath Mishra had started pleading with Sanjay Gandhi to "grace Bihar" by agreeing to contest Lok Sabha elections from his late brother's constituency, Darbhanga. "The people of Bihar would feel honoured," Mishra told him. The even greater Sanjay crony, Sitaram Kesari, whom Lalit Narayan Mishra had thrust on the Bihar Congress, did not lag behind. "You

[5] Report in *Economic Weekly*, Bombay, 31 March 1972.

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must contest from Bihar," he never tired of telling Sanjay Gandhi. Devraj Urs, Gyani Zail Singh, and several others were also striving to have their own states "honoured."

To go for elections was not an easy decision for Indira Gandhi. The life of the Lok Sabha had already been extended till 1978 March, but her schizophrenic mind never left her at peace. No matter how hard she tried to put a cloak of legality on her position, she could never hide the illegality of it. If her son was "extra-constitutional" she herself had become "unconstitutional." It hurt the *amour-propre* of this "democratic Empress" that some people did not appreciate her efforts to trim the Constitution to fit her size. She was itching to show it to them that she still derived her powers from the masses of India. She would show to the world that the 600 million people of the country who "worshipped" her would not tolerate the "treason" of a handful of opposition leaders whom her media had already painted as villainous Nazis and fascists.

The Godmother must have been happy to see how well her son had come up, and how fast. He was being extolled and adulated all over the country and most of her satraps had already accepted him as their "future leader." She had seen her boy on his triumphant tours on the half-hour TV programmes, the motorcades, the processions, the huge public meetings. She must have believed that he had made it. You could not blame a doting mother if she had failed to see how dumb the boy looked to viewers round the country. There had been mumbled complaints about the manner in which her son's programmes were being implemented, but she thought these critics were only jealous of Sanjay's great popularity. "He is doing wonderful work," she told partymen who dropped oblique hints about the people's growing resentment. The time had come, she thought, to formalize his position.

But what delayed a decision was the nagging thought: "What if things went wrong?" She could not take a plunge until her spies and pundits gave the clearance.

Indira Gandhi's intelligence networks were working overtime to assess the political atmosphere. Trusted officers of the Intelligence Bureau and the RAW were spinning round the country. But their reports were no longer going to her straight. She had been sealed off by a wall.

In early January 1977, Om Mehta informed Sanjay Gandhi that the latest intelligence reports indicated that it would not be "safe" to hold elections, specially in view of the tensions created by the implementation of the family planning programme. Sanjay Gandhi flew into a temper and said: "Where are the reports? Show them to me."[6]

The faithful Om Mehta, who felt at home only in the world of commands, took the files to the prince, who scanned them with increasing anger. "All rubbish," he is believed to have shouted. "What do these people know? I have been going all over the country. These reports are rubbish. The Prime Minister will not like them. "Sanjay Gandhi is said to have thrown the files so hard that the pages went flying. A jittery Om Mehta picked up the pages, put them back in the file, and left.

He called the intelligence officials and told them that Sanjay Gandhi was "very unhappy" with the reports. One of the senior officials reportedly expressed his helplessness. "Sir, we can't manufacture reports, can we?"

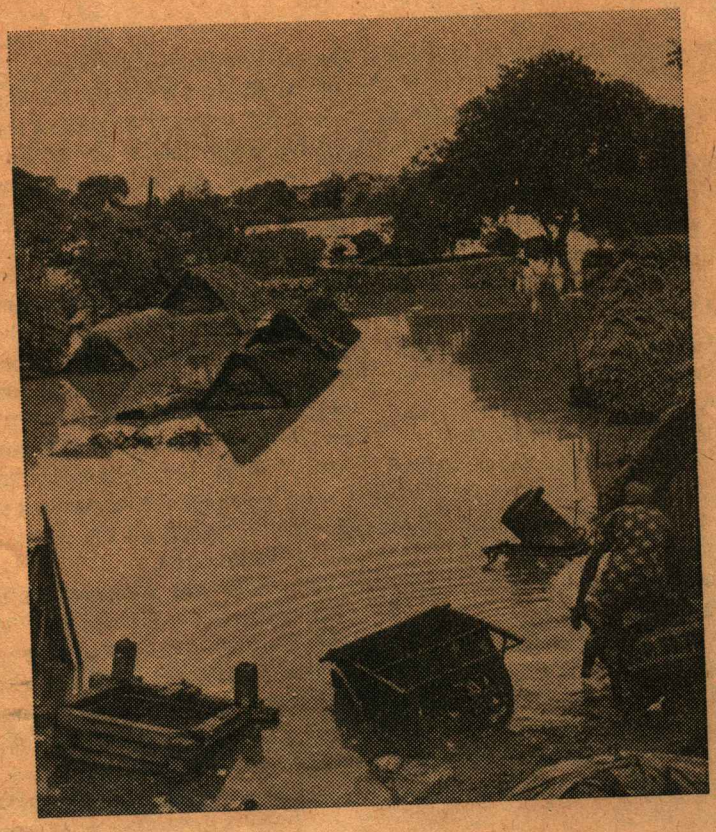
But once again the trusted intelligence men posted in the states were asked to send fresh assessments and some officers were sent out from Delhi on "reconnaissance" missions. But again the burden of their information was the same: people were indignant, specially the Muslims. And again Sanjay Gandhi was furious: "You people don't go to the field as I do. The entire country is solidly behind us."

More intelligence men were sent off to various states. Within days came their report: it was the most opportune time for elections.

But Indira Gandhi still awaited clearance from her pundits. A special panel of three top astrologers of the country was drawn up after long discussions at No. 1 Safdarjang Road. Since Yashpal Kapoor was the man who knew the creatures of the astral world as well as he knew the political underworld, he was assigned to contact the astrologers. Kapoor met them separately one in Delhi, one in Allahabad, and the third in Trivandrum. Each of them made a careful study of the *kundalis* (birth-charts) of Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi and they came to the conclusion that an early election would be most "propitious."

The way for the elections cleared, Sanjay Gandhi and Bansi Lal tried to persuade Indira

[6] As related to the author by an intelligence source.



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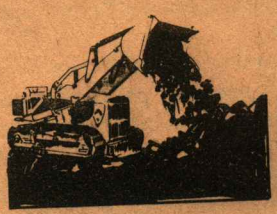

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Gandhi that the top leaders of the opposition should not be released. But she is believed to have argued that this would defeat one of the major purposes of the elections. Even if they won hands down the world would say that it was a phoney victory. And in any case what was the harm in releasing them? They were too down and out to make any differences—all spent-up forces.

After Jagjivan Ram threw his bombshell and the great Youth Congress dreams lay shattered, one of Sanjay's cronies in Uttar Pradesh suggested that he should "requisition the services" of a Benares yogi. Since he was told that the holy man would not stir out of Benares, Sanjay Gandhi sent a special emissary to him. The yogi was reluctant to have anything to do with the business, but on great persuasion he is believed to have said that the "time is not good for the boy." When this was reported to Indira Gandhi, she got very perturbed and sent another emissary to Benares. Under pressure, the yogi said he would try to do something about the boy's bad stars, but as it transpired later, the yogi had also been approached by some leaders of the opposition and he had assured them that he would use all his powers to help them in the "Indira Hatao" mission. The way the astrologers and holy men are supposed to have behaved, it almost seemed they had joined in a conspiracy against the Godmother and her flock!

She had a *tilak* on her forehead when she entered the court room of the Rae Bareli District Magistrate on 17 February. It was exactly 11.30 A.M., which her pundits had determined as the most auspicious moment for filing her nomination. She had reached the court compound about fifteen minutes earlier, but had remained sitting in her green Chevrolet a little away from the court room, waiting for the right time.

"She looks so tense!" remarked a reporter as Indira Gandhi entered the court room and sat in a chair next to the District Magistrate. The arc-lights of cameramen and photographers showed the beads of perspiration on her carefully done-up face. "That's the same sari she wore for her *padayatra,*" remarked another reporter, and she looked round, as though she had heard him. Behind her chair stood Narayan Dutt Tewari, Om Mehta, and a beaming Yashpal Kapoor. "That man has nine lives," whispered somebody in the crowd. "She can't fight an election without him," he went on whispering. He obviously meant Yashpal Kapoor.

Indira Gandhi had taken a pen to sign the nomination papers, but Kapoor had immediately come forward and whispered something to her. She waited, while her "Hanuman" opened his famous briefcase and brought out a gold-cap Parker. He opened it with a flourish, gave it a jerk to see if it was flowing properly, and then offered it to her. Even as she was signing the nomination papers, her shaggy-bearded opponent pushed through the crowd yelling and shouting: "Let me get in, let me get in. I am getting late." Raj Narain's pundits too had given him the same "auspicious time." How can it be auspicious for both, asked someone in the crowd and Raj Narain retorted: "This time it is auspicious for me! Let me in, I must greet her." But before he could push his way through, Indira Gandhi had left the room amidst cries of "Raj Narain *Zindabad*" and "*Tanashahi Nahi Chalegi*" by his supporters gathered outside. As Martin Woollacott of the *Guardian* had written a few days earlier, democracy had returned to India with a bang!

The fear of the previous 19 months was suddenly gone. Even in remote villages, people were showing a different face. Before filing her nomination, Indira Gandhi had gone to her first election meeting in the constituency, at village Dasauti, on the border of her son's constituency, Amethi. Sure enough, Sanjay Gandhi had entered the race. After Jagjivan Ram had queered the pitch for the Congress, many had thought that Indira Gandhi would persuade her son to keep out of the elections. That is one way she can still save the party from disaster, said people who believed that the son was the sole villain of the peace. If she disowns him, she will win hands down, they said. That had been the greatest bane of politicians; they thought they could go on fooling the people for ever. But in any case, it was too much to hope that she would leave her son in the lurch. It was for him that the elections were primarily meant. The mother and the son were going to fight back together.

At the same "auspicious moment" Sanjay Gandhi had filed his nomination at Sultanpur which had put Narayan Dutt Tewari in a great dilemma. He had found it hard to decide whether to be with the mother or with the son at the auspicious moment. Tewari had considered

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Sanjay's candidature from Amethi a personal victory, a victory over so many Chief Ministers of the country who had been vying with one another to persuade Sanjay to contest from their states. "What do you think?" Tewari had asked one of his senior officers. "Should I go to Rae Bareli with the Prime Minister or should I go to Sultanpur?" The officer had told him hesitantly that the official protocol demanded that he should go with the Prime Minister. Tewari had thought for a while and then decided that the officer was perhaps right.

A beautifully done-up dais waited for the Prime Minister at Dasauti. Hundreds of policemen lined the route and at the meeting ground district officials distributed a report on the "great strides" that Rae Bareli had taken in the past few years. About two dozen Congressmen and women stood around with huge garlands in their hands. There was everything and yet somehow it looked different from most Indira Gandhi meetings one had seen in the past. There was no "Indira crowd." Barely three hundred villagers. Acres of empty barricades stretched beyond the dais. The local organizers were looking around anxiously but there were only a dozen or two villagers strolling down the dusty roads. What had happened to the people of Dasauti and the neighbouring villages? Where had they disappeared? A burly Congressman of the area took the mike and began delivering an impassioned speech on the "great and beloved leader under whom Rae Bareli will soon become as big and prosperous as Calcutta or Bombay." But after he had spoken for 20 minutes there were no more people than before. Nor was there time. The Prime Minsiter's motorcade had arrived.

The garland-bearing Congressmen fell into a disciplined line to give her a guard of honour, but she rushed straight up the dais. Indira Gandhi looked around, frowned, and said something irritatedly to the lady MLA of Rae Bareli who had been bulldozed to victory in the fourth count in 1974. Indira Gandhi turned around and came to the head of the stairs and motioned to the party men still standing in a row. One by one they went up the stairs, offered their garlands, touched her feet, and descended. The ritual over, she spoke for a minute and a half. One could see that she was not going to waste her breath for a couple of hundred people, half of them below the voting age.

The crowd was only slightly better at the second and third meetings in her constituency. By then she was so perturbed over the poor turnouts that she asked Tewari: "Why are the crowds so poor?" For a moment, Tewari fumbled for words and then said: "Er, the villagers seem to have gone for lunch." That seemed to reassure Indira Gandhi. "O, I see," she said. This great leader of the poor and downtrodden masses seemed to know even less about the people in whose name she ruled than her illustrious father. At best, Nehru was a pseudo-socialist, but Indira Gandhi was not even that. She had few real convictions, and as her one-time Press Adviser George Verghese said, "She has no consistent vision; everything is tactics." Like her son, Indira Gandhi was neither left nor right. She herself had confessed to an American writer: "I don't really have a political philosophy. I can't say I believe in any ism." If anything, Indira Gandhi was "slightly to the left of self-interest," as one British journalist put it.

As the campaign progressed, it became clear that her spell had broken, even in her very own Rae Bareli. Far from worshipping her, the villagers had turned even hostile at places. Add to this the rivalries of the courtiers working for her in the constituency and the result was not difficult to foresee.

There was quite a bunch of them. Presiding over the campaign from his first-floor room in the central election office was Jagpat Dube, a smooth 40-year-old man, clad in silk, heavily dabbed with cologne. He claimed he had been the election agent of the Nehru family in five general elections. Exuding confidence, he said it was only a question of working for a bigger margin of victory. "We want Indira Gandhi to win by at least two and a half lakh votes this time!"

Dube had been studying at Allahabad University when he had first come in contact with the Nehru family. He had then become the caretaker of Anand Bhawan where he earned for himself the reputation of being a playboy. But he was not one of those who tried to extend their activities beyond the house. By mid-sixties his importance in the household had gone down, but he still remained a family retainer and was occasionally "rewarded" with such things as a membership of the khadi board or election agentship in Rae Bareli.

Also presiding over the campaign was the one-time Nawab of Rae Bareli, Yashpal Kapoor,

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and it was only natural that he should have looked upon Jagpat Dube as an imposition on him. The upset in the Allahabad High Court had put him in the doghouse and he never quite regained his former position at the court. His relations with Sanjay Gandhi were none too warm, thanks to Dhawan who knew that he could not consolidate his own position at court unless Kapoor was elbowed out.

During the Emergency, Yashpal Kapoor had gradually drifted to his own money-spinning operations, one of which was the chain of exhibitions on the 20-point programme. Another lucrative operation was the central campaign committee of the Congress. Kapoor had also started a so-called national forum of journalists and netted quite a number of senior correspondents in this thinly veiled racket.

By the time the Lok Sabha elections were announced, Dhawan had managed to turn Sanjay Gandhi so much against Kapoor that the boy started telling his mother that it would not be safe to send him to Rae Bareli. Indira Gandhi summoned her old Muneemji, Umashankar Dixit, whom she had made Governor of Andhra Pradesh, for consultations. When Yashpal learnt that he was being kept out of Rae Bareli, he went straight to Indira Gandhi and almost wept. She was so moved by his protestations of faithfulness that she told him he would certainly go to Rae Bareli. Kapoor thought he had won. But in the meantime Dhawan and Sanjay had managed to persuade Indira Gandhi to send Jagpat Dube as the Chief Election Agent. This, they thought, would neutralize Yashpal Kapoor. It was quite in line with Indira Gandhi's usual style of fostering the anarchy of rivalries around her. From the outset of her career, this had been one of her most successful devices for her own tactical success. It was because of these rivalries that she had remained the exclusive point of reference in the party. But in the end this strategy was to recoil on herself. It became one of the major factors of her defeat in Rae Bareli.

Apart from Dube and Kapoor, there were other campaign managers at the local and the state levels. Among them were Gaya Prasad Shukla, Chairman of the Rae Bareli Zilla Parishad, and S. P. Singh, the UP Transport Minister. Overseeing the campaign was her faithful "Omji" who jetted back and forth between Delhi and Lucknow all through the campaign. At a rather late stage, the rivalry between Jagpat Dube and Yashpal Kapoor was thought to be telling on the campaign and so Om Mehta suggested that an outsider be sent to Rae Bareli to supervise the polling and the counting operations. For this, Om Mehta chose Makhanlal Fotedar, a man from his own state. All of them operated from their own little ivory towers, and the upshot was total confusion.

But till the last day none of them could see what they were heading for. Some had their heads in the sand; others did not have the intelligence to see it. Just a few days before the polling, Indira's Goebbels returned from a tour of Rae Bareli and announced perkily to pressmen at Lucknow: "What to talk of a wave, I did not even see a Janata ripple anywhere in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar."

On the evening of 16 March, after the polling was over in many parts of the country, Jagpat Dube told a correspondent: "Do you know, I have just got very authoritative information that Bahuguna is badly losing in Lucknow. Sheila Kaul is winning hands down."

"Is that so?" said the correspondent ironically.

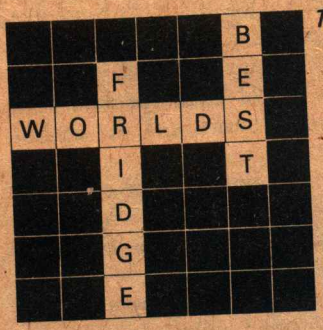
"Believe me, it's from a very good source. Chaudhuri Charan Singh is also gone!"

About Rae Bareli, of course, Dube was cocksure. "It will be a thumping victory! Just wait and see."

By 5 P.M. on 20 March, Jagpat Dube looked as though he had been struck by palsy. Yashpal Kapoor paced up and down in the anteroom of the District Magistrate's court. Fotedar chain-smoked his *India Kings*. At 11 that morning he had been the picture of confidence, now he was a bundle of nerves, his face ashen.

A news agency man was getting frantic to get the first results of the counting. By then the trend was known to all. There was not a single table in any of the counting booths where Indira Gandhi was leading by even a single vote. But there was no official announcement. Jawans of the Border Security Force armed with sten-guns has taken position outside the counting booths, nobody knew why. Tension was mounting. One press correspondent rushed to Raj Narain to seek his help in getting an official announcement.

He was going around the counting booths, now confident of victory but still tense. When he heard the correspondent's apprehension that the results may not be announced, Raj Narain burst out: "Who says? Blood will flow here if



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they withhold the results."

He rushed into the court room looking for the District Magistrate, Vinod Malhotra. When he found him, he demanded: "Why don't you let the people know the result of the first round?" Malhotra said he had just received instructions from Delhi to hold the results for some time. "But how can you do that?" asked Raj Narain, getting worked up. "There is no provision for holding up results. You can't have new rules for this constituency. You have to announce it." Standing nearby was the Election Commission Observer, a quiet but firm man. He told the Returning Officer that Raj Narain was right in saying that there was no provision to withhold the results. This came as a relief to Malhotra who himself had been in favour of doing what was right but had been under constant pressure from Indira Gandhi's men to withhold the results. Now that he had got the backing of the Election Commission man, he told the correspondents that he would immediately instruct his Assistant Returning Officers to give them the official results of the first round of counting.

Raj Narain had already established a big lead over Indira Gandhi. The BSF officers were whispering to one another, but you could see that they were far from unhappy at the unexpected turn of events. But they themselves seemed as apprehensive about the part they might be called upon to play as many others were.

It was around ten in the night that the real drama began. Frantic telephone calls started coming every five minutes from No. 1 Safdarjang Road, New Delhi, asking for the Returning Officer. At one point, Malhotra thought it wiser to leave the place for a while. "Don't tell them where I am," he told his colleagues and retired to an adjacent room. But he could not be away all the time. Om Mehta was telephoning every five minutes or so. Fotedar was rushing from one counting booth to another, his face getting paler every time fresh results came in.

With no earthly hope of making up left, Fotedar came up with a petition asking for a repoll in the constituency. "How can this be done now?" was the first reaction of the courageous Returning Officer. Perhaps no other officer in the country had a more difficult job that day than Malhotra. He decided to hold court formally and hear what Fotedar's lawyer had to say. The polling in the constituency, the lawyer pleaded, had been a "big fraud." He alleged that outsiders had poured into the constituency in big number and voted for the Janata Party.

Malhotra was obviously not convinced, but he seemed to be looking for a legal point to reject the petition. Once again the Election Commission Observer, who had kept his cool through the tensest hours of the day, came to the Returning Officer's aid. "With your permission, could I say something?" Malhotra was only too happy about this timely intervention. "Oh yes, please go on," he said.

The Observer asked the petitioner if he could point out the provision of the Election Commission rules under which he was asking for a repoll at this stage. This threw Fotedar and his lawyer into a flutter. They started riffling through the Election Commission manual frenziedly, but could find nothing to back up their case. Malhotra had got the clue, and he now stuck to it. "I give you fifteen minutes to substantiate your case," he told Fotedar.

Thousands of people had gathered round the court, determined not to allow any fishy business. Raj Narain tried to pacify his irate followers. "Don't worry, they can do nothing now." But in Delhi, frantic efforts were still on. Indira Gandhi herself was not even informed of her own position until about 8 P.M., but Om Mehta and Dhawan were making all possible attempts to get the Rae Bareli counting stopped. At one stage, Om Mehta telephoned the Chief Election Commissioner. But T. Swaminathan is believed to have told him that he could not take any action without a report from the Returning Officer. As far as he knew the counting had been perfectly in order and there was no cause for action.

Eleven years ago Indira Gandhi had taken the reins of government with the promise to be a "worthy servant of this great people." She had risen to great heights, but she could not keep herself there, because her "greatness" was a mere facade, a build-up. It lacked authenticity. Even mediocre men have made successful rulers with sincerity of purpose, but Indira Gandhi lacked even that. She raised hopes which she had no intention of fulfilling. Her government was as schizophrenic as herself; it sought to draw its power from the poor and the downtrodden and serve the interests of the exploiters—of her own class.

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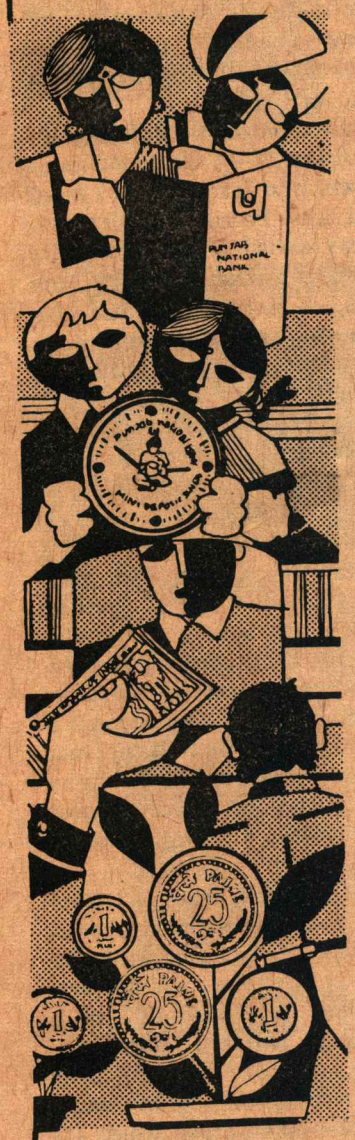

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The game was up. Amethi too had been lost. Late that evening, Sanjay Gandhi had driven from Sultanpur to Lucknow, and arrived at Tewari's house looking a wreck. "How is mummy?" he had asked, and was told she was trailing. He was stunned into silence. **END**

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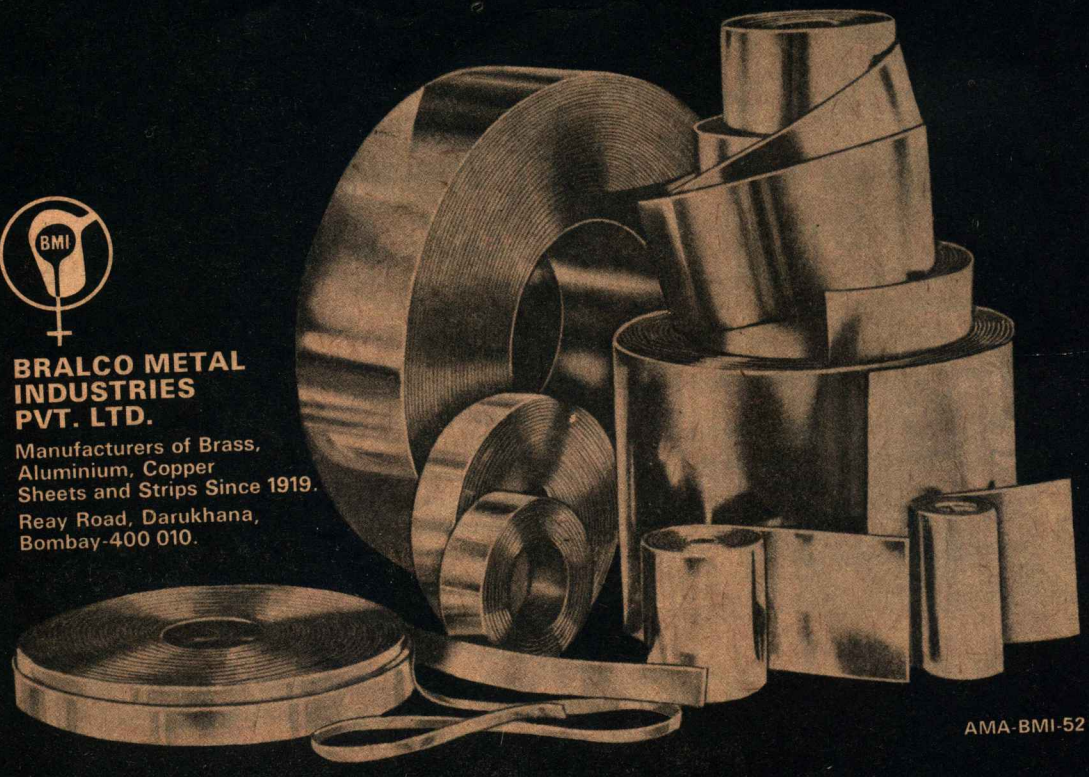

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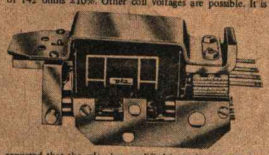

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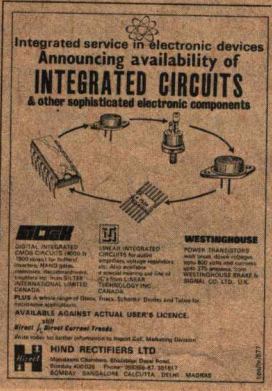

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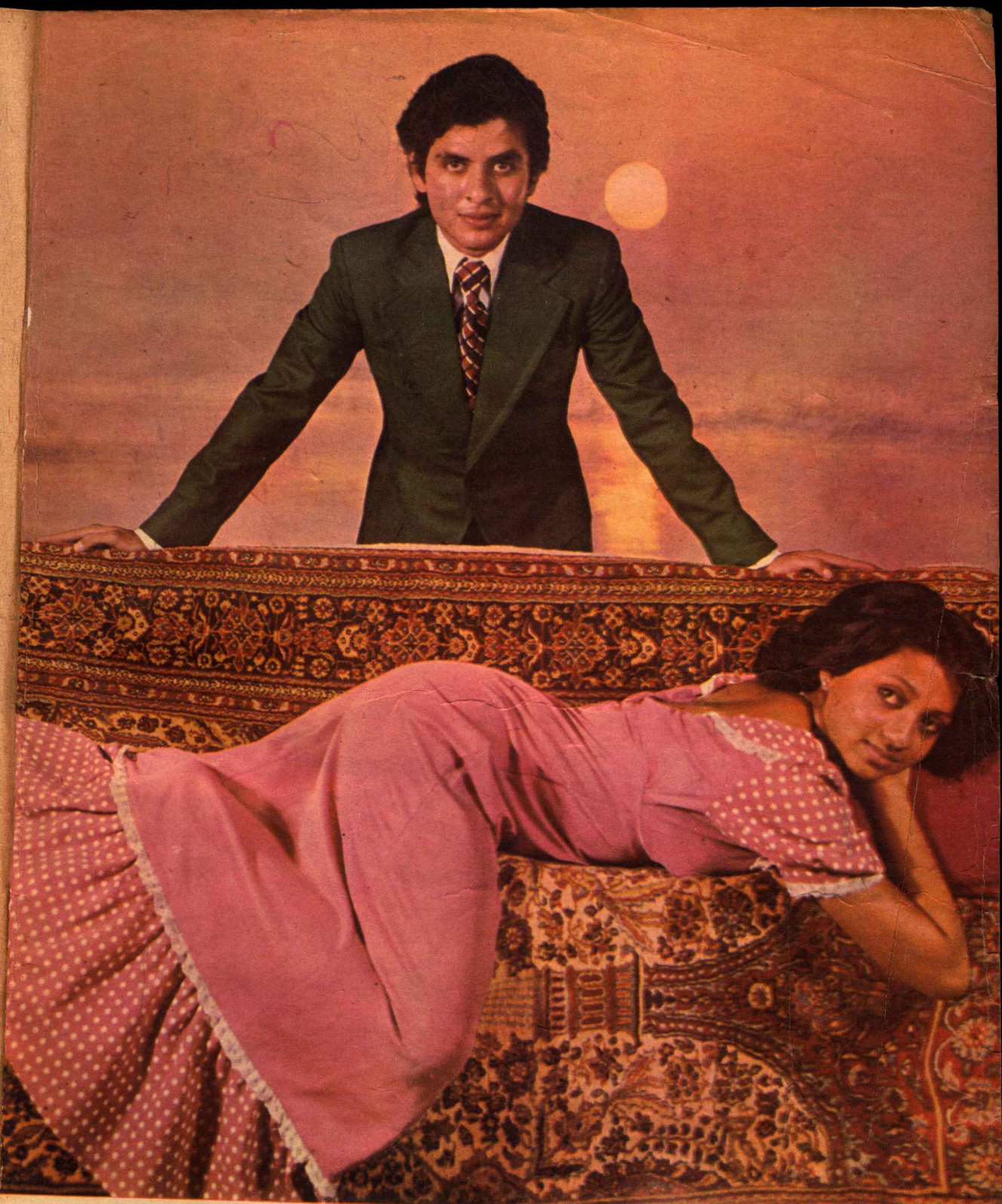

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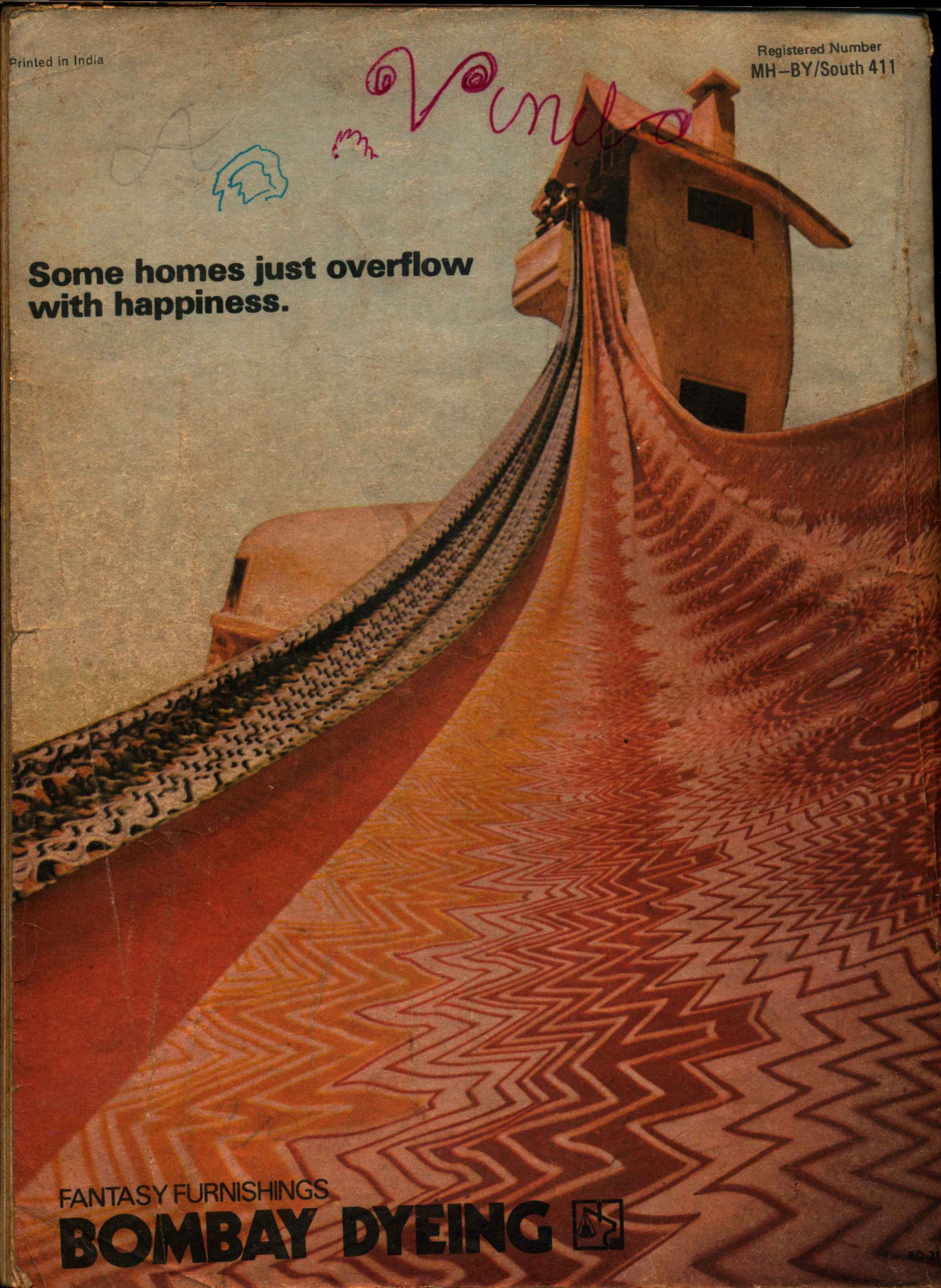
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